







# EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT





*[Drawn by Bernard Tomlin]*

"... WHILE I AM AMONG THE JUST KINGS WHO ARE BEFORE AMUN  
RE', KING OF GODS, AND BEFORE OSIRIS, RULER OF ETERNITY!"

# EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

BY

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TO MY  
MOTHER AND FATHER  
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED



## PREFACE

This book is an attempt to present to the reader as simply and clearly as possible a picture of life in Ancient Egypt at the height of her civilisation, and in order to render my account as continuous as possible I have, in great part, adopted a "story method." That is to say, I have chosen certain characters, either real or imaginary, and woven around them narratives incorporating the information which has been secured for us by archæological research. This being so, it might be well to make quite clear at the beginning, in order to prevent confusion, the manner in which the work has been done.

The scenes described throughout the book are set, unless explicit reference is made to another period, during the "New Kingdom," and range through the period extending from about 1450 B.C., the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty, to about 1100 B.C., the end of the Twentieth, a time which has left us more evidence for its reconstruction than any other. To maintain that social and political conditions did not alter during this long stretch of years would be manifestly absurd, but the period is sufficiently a unity to furnish material for a composite picture of Egyptian life. In these accounts, moreover, the reader must remember that he is not reading the

chronicles of *actual events*, although various events known to have occurred at different times during this period may have been adapted for our purpose. For instance the famous conspiracy against Rameses III, recorded in the Turin Judicial Papyrus and another document, suggested the plot against Pharaoh described in Chapter I, and Chapter VII is an imaginative expansion of the facts to be found in the Amherst Papyrus, published and translated by Professor Peet in *The Great Tomb-Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty*.

In adopting, for the sake of vividness, the method of writing just described, I am fully aware that I lay myself open to possible charges of unscholarly popularization. But if thought is given to the matter it will be seen at once that such use of the imagination is perfectly legitimate where the material preserved is of a scattered nature, as it needs must be in the case of an ancient civilisation. These composite narratives are confined to Chapter I, most of Chapter II, pages 69-73 in Chapter III, the first half of Chapter IV, and Chapters V and VII. The rest is a plain statement of facts as they have been recovered by archæological science. To this has been added a short essay, Chapter IX, on certain aspects of Pharaoh and his kingdom.

The illustrations have been carefully chosen so as to supplement the written account with pictures of concrete objects connected with the daily life of the Egyptians. A large number of these is preserved in the British Museum, where they may be viewed,

together with many others, by the reader himself. The reconstructive pictures on the frontispiece and Plates xx and xxx have been specially drawn for the book by my friend, Mr. Bernard Tomlins, who has taken the greatest trouble to make full use of the available material.

Finally, my sincere thanks are due to Professor Adolf Erman and Dr. A. M. Blackman for their kind permission to quote frequently from the beautiful renderings of Egyptian texts contained in their book, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, and to Messrs. Methuen for allowing me to reproduce the same; to Dr. Alan Gardiner, Dr. A. M. Blackman, and Mr. Battiscombe Gunn for permission to quote from some of their translations; to Professor T. E. Peet and the Delegates of the Clarendon Press for kindly allowing me to make extensive use of the material contained in his book *The Great Tomb-Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty*; to the Trustees of the British Museum, the Keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, the Director of the Science Museum, and to the Egypt Exploration Society for permission to publish photographs and reproduce illustrations, and to my wife, to Mr. Sidney Smith, to Mr. C. J. Gadd and to Mr. S. R. K. Glanville for their great kindness in reading proofs and contributing many helpful criticisms and suggestions. The index has been prepared by Mr. A. J. Hughes.

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# CONTENTS

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| INTRODUCTION: SYNOPSIS OF THE HISTORY OF EGYPT | I    |
| CHAPTER  |      |
| I. PHARAOH, THE "GOOD GOD" . . . .             | 16   |
| II. SPORT AND PLEASURE . . . .                 | 38   |
| III. THE GODS AND THEIR WORSHIP . . . .        | 55   |
| IV. THE EXCELLENT SCRIBES . . . .              | 78   |
| V. A GOODLY BURIAL IN THE NECROPOLIS . .       | 101  |
| VI. LABOURERS AND CRAFTSMEN . . . .            | 125  |
| VII. THE GREAT CRIMINALS . . . .               | 150  |
| VIII. TREASURES OF THE PAST . . . .            | 165  |
| IX. THE SPIRIT OF EGYPT . . . .                | 181  |



# ILLUSTRATIONS

| PLATE |  | FACE<br>PAGE |
|-------|--|--------------|
|       | "WHILE I AM AMONG THE JUST KINGS WHO<br>ARE BEFORE AMON-RÉ, KING OF GODS,<br>....."<br><i>Frontispiece</i> |              |
| I.    | <i>Fig. 1.</i> MENTHU, GOD OF HERMONTHIS .   | 16           |
|       | <i>Fig. 2.</i> AMON-RÉ, THE GREAT GOD OF<br>THEBES . . . . .   | 16           |
| II.   | HALL OF AUDIENCE IN PALACE OF<br>AKHENATEN . . . . .   | 17           |
| III.  | PAIR OF GOLD BRACELETS . . . . .   | 24           |
| IV.   | <i>Fig. 1.</i> BRONZE CENSER . . . . .   | 25           |
|       | <i>Fig. 2.</i> EGYPTIAN FLUTES . . . . .   | 25           |
| V.    | <i>Fig. 1.</i> WOODEN FIGURE OF GIRL WITH<br>HARP . . . . .  | 40           |
|       | <i>Fig. 2.</i> BRONZE SISTRUM . . . . .  | 40           |
| VI.   | FRESCO FROM AN EGYPTIAN TOMB . . . . .   | 41           |
| VII.  | <i>Fig. 1.</i> RESTORATION OF ROOM—HOUSE<br>OF VIZIER NEKHT . . . . .                                      | 48           |
|       | <i>Fig. 2.</i> PLAN OF THE HOUSE OF VIZIER<br>NEKHT . . . . .  | 48           |
| VIII. | SECTION OF A PRIVATE HOUSE AT<br>EL 'AMARNEH . . . . .   | 49           |
| IX.   | <i>Fig. 1.</i> STONE GRILLE-WINDOWS . . . . .  | 64           |
|       | <i>Fig. 2.</i> HOUSE OF THE VIZIER NEKHT . . . . .   | 64           |
| X.    | INTERIOR OF HOUSE OF THE VIZIER NEKHT . . . . .  | 65           |
| XI.   | FRESCO FROM AN EGYPTIAN TOMB . . . . .   | 72           |
| XII.  | SEATED STATUES OF A NOBLE AND HIS WIFE . . . . .   | 73           |
| XIII. | <i>Fig. 1.</i> IVORY HEAD-REST . . . . .   | 88           |
|       | <i>Fig. 2.</i> WIG OF AN EGYPTIAN LADY . . . . .   | 88           |
| XIV.  | <i>Fig. 1.</i> MULTI-COLOURED GLASS VASE . . . . .   | 89           |
|       | <i>Fig. 2.</i> GLAZED FAÏENCE BEAD COLLAR . . . . .  | 89           |
| XV.   | Kohl-TUBES OF DIFFERENT TYPES . . . . .  | 96           |

| PLATE    |  | PAGE |
|----------|--|------|
| XVI.     | TOILET-CHEST OF AN EGYPTIAN LADY . . . . .                   | 97   |
| XVII.    | <i>Fig. 1.</i> POTTERY WINE JAR . . . . .                    | 112  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> PARTS OF SIPHON . . . . .                     | 112  |
| XVIII.   | <i>Fig. 1.</i> BRONZE STATUETTE OF OSIRIS . . . . .          | 113  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> BRONZE STATUETTE OF ISIS-<br>HATHOR . . . . . | 113  |
| XIX.     | <i>Fig. 1.</i> MUMMY OF A SACRED BULL . . . . .              | 120  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> BRONZE CAT WITH GOLD EARRINGS . . . . .       | 120  |
| XX.      | AN EGYPTIAN DEITY CARRIED IN PRO-<br>CESSION . . . . .       | 121  |
| XXI.     | <i>Fig. 1.</i> THE RAMESSEUM, THEBES . . . . .               | 136  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> ONE OF THE COLOSSI OF MEMNON . . . . .        | 136  |
| XXII.    | SPECIMEN OF HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING . . . . .                   | 137  |
| XXIII.   | PAGE OF A HIERATIC PAPYRUS . . . . .                         | 144  |
| XXIV.    | SCRIBES' PALETTES AND PENS . . . . .                         | 145  |
| XXV.     | WOODEN WRITING BOARD . . . . .                               | 152  |
| XXVI.    | <i>Fig. 1.</i> SCARAB RING OF PTAHMOSE . . . . .             | 153  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> MUMMY OF A PRIEST . . . . .                   | 153  |
| XXVII.   | <i>Fig. 1.</i> INNER COFFIN OF HENTMEHYT . . . . .           | 160  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> MUMMY OF KATEBET . . . . .                    | 160  |
| XXVIII.  | <i>Ushabti</i> -FIGURES OF DIFFERENT PERIODS . . . . .       | 161  |
| XXIX.    | VIGNETTE FROM THE BOOK OF THE DEAD . . . . .                 | 168  |
| XXX.     | "I OPEN THY MOUTH WITH THE GREAT<br>MAGICIAN!" . . . . .     | 169  |
| XXXI.    | <i>Fig. 1.</i> EGYPTIAN WOODEN HOE . . . . .                 | 176  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> EGYPTIAN WOODEN SICKLE . . . . .              | 176  |
| XXXII.   | TRANSPORT OF A COLOSSAL STATUE . . . . .                     | 177  |
| XXXIII.  | COFFIN OF KING ANTEF V. . . . .                              | 184  |
| XXXIV.   | <i>Fig. 1.</i> VIEW OF EL 'AMARNEH . . . . .                 | 185  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> EXCAVATIONS IN PROGRESS . . . . .             | 185  |
| XXXV.    | <i>Fig. 1.</i> CENTRAL ROOM OF A HOUSE . . . . .             | 192  |
|          | <i>Fig. 2.</i> FLOOR OF ABOVE ROOM . . . . .                 | 192  |
| XXXVI.   | GRANITE STATUE OF KING SENUSERT III . . . . .                | 193  |
| XXXVII.  | OBSIDIAN PORTRAIT-HEAD OF A KING . . . . .                   | 196  |
| XXXVIII. | UPPER PART OF A COLOSSAL STATUE OF<br>RAMESES II . . . . .   | 197  |

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## INTRODUCTION

### SYNOPSIS OF THE HISTORY OF EGYPT

THE earliest people who inhabited Egypt in the Palæolithic Period, when the country was a swamp, have left us the flint weapons and tools which they used scattered about over the high deserts, but there is nothing to tell us more about them. When we first obtain a glimpse of the primitive inhabitants of Egypt the country has taken on the features which it presents to-day. These prehistoric Egyptians were of the Hamitic stock, to which also the Nubians of early times belonged, quite distinct from the negroid peoples who, at that time, had not penetrated far north of the Equator. They had dark hair, short and curly, long pointed noses, almond-shaped eyes and pointed beards, and their complexion must have varied, as it does to-day, from dark red-brown in the south to reddish-yellow in the north. On the west of the Egyptians were the Libyans, a people with fair skins, and on the east a number of desert tribes, while to the north and



east of Egypt dwelt the Semites of Palestine and Arabia. In later times the Egyptians appear to have believed that they themselves originally came from Punt, the African country with which ancient Egypt had constant trade connections all through her history, and which is probably to be identified with Somaliland. There is great similarity between the Puntites as represented on the Egyptian monuments and the Egyptians themselves, and it is highly probable that the pre-dynastic Egyptians found their way from the south, passing up the Red Sea coast and entering Egypt through the Wadi Hamamat, thereafter spreading southward into Nubia as well.

The people of the Pre-dynastic Period—that is to say the period preceding the First Dynasty of Egyptian kings, which extends back from about 3300 B.C.—have left us abundant remains of their civilisation, so that we are able to obtain a very fair idea of what it was like. The very earliest civilisations, known as the “Tasian” and “Badarian,” which were only discovered a few years ago, made a curious type of pottery, the outer surface of which had been scratched over with a comb before firing. The British Museum exhibits a fine series of objects from the graves of these most ancient Egyptians—strings of shells, quaint figures and ornaments of ivory, and other things. Already the Egyptians had learnt the elements of the craftsmanship in which they were later to excel, and could cover beads of steatite with a green

glaze, or carve a piece of ivory into an exquisite toilet-vase shaped like a hippopotamus.

It is the later part of the Pre-dynastic Period, however, of which we know most, and of which ample remains have been recovered by modern excavation. The Egyptians of this time lived in huts built of palm-ribs and mud, and gained their livelihood by agriculture and hunting. When they died they were buried in a shallow grave dug in the sand of the desert, the body being arranged in a "contracted" position with knees up to chin, and wrapped in a skin or mat. Around the dead person were placed the things which he had used during life and which he would need again in the life beyond the grave—pots for cooking and storing food, flint weapons, and stone palettes for grinding the green paint with which his eyes were adorned. The body of one of these pre-dynastic people is exhibited in the British Museum; the dry sand of the desert has completely desiccated it so that flesh, skin and hair are preserved.

As to the political history of Egypt during the Pre-dynastic Period we have no certain information, although probable reconstructions have been made by Egyptologists. We can, at any rate, picture the gradual centralisation of authority in various districts, the grouping of several towns under the leadership of one important chief, the alliance of chief with chief and the conquest of weaker rulers by the stronger. Whatever course events took the result appears to have been that about 3300 B.C.

#### 4 EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Egypt consisted of two separate kingdoms, one in the north, the other in the south. The capital of the southern kingdom was the town called by the Greeks Hieraconpolis, the place to-day known as El-Kab. The kings of Hieraconpolis waged war upon their rivals in the north until one of their number, a monarch called Mena (also Narmer), succeeded in breaking the northern power completely and made himself ruler of a united Egypt.

Tradition tells us that Mena (or Menes as the Greeks called him) founded the city of Memphis as his capital, and we know that he was regarded in later times as the head of the first dynasty of kings. From that time onwards, although the Pharaohs ruled over an undivided realm, the fiction of the two ancient kingdoms was kept up till the end of Egyptian history. The whole administration was supposed to be double, there was a double palace, a double granary, etc., and the duality of the Egyptian kingship was symbolised for all time by the double crown of Pharaoh, composed of the white and red crowns which had been worn by the rulers of the southern and northern kingdoms respectively.

In this way the first great period of Egyptian civilisation began, called by students the "Archaic Period," which lasted until the end of the Third Dynasty about 2900 B.C. The succeeding period, from the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty to the fall of the Sixth (in about 2400 B.C.) is known as the "Old Kingdom." This latter was the time of

Egypt's growth, the age of which the freshness and vigour were never realised again. Pharaoh was supreme in power; he ruled Egypt from his palace, surrounded by the great nobles whom he favoured, attended by them in life and also in death, for their tombs were ranged around his pyramid. The nomes, or districts into which Egypt was divided, were administrated by local governors or deputies who held their offices at the king's pleasure. As time went on, however, and the royal power weakened, the great nobles ceased to spend their lives at court, and began to rule the nomes themselves, and to be buried locally instead of near the king. The result was that Pharaoh found himself dependant upon the support of his nobles, and the state of affairs resembled that of Europe during the feudal age. As long as the king remained strong all was well, but at the first sign of weakness in the central authority the powerful barons would revolt and chaos ensue.

The administrative organisation of the country was centred around the royal palace, the king being the hub of Egyptian civilisation, and in later times the king was actually spoken of as *Per-āa*, the "Great House" or "Palace." Thus *Per-āa* became, in Hebrew, "Pharaoh," and we may compare the Turkish custom of referring to the Sultan as "The Sublime Porte."

The most splendid monument which the Old Kingdom has left us is to be found in the pyramids and tombs of Gizeh, opposite Cairo, near the site

of the ancient city of Memphis. On this rocky plateau the kings built those eternal monuments of stone which have excited the admiration of travellers, and in Greek and Roman times were included among the Seven Wonders of the World. Most marvellous of all is the Great Pyramid, built by Khufu, which rises 451 feet above the desert, and covers an area of nearly 13 acres. The pyramid of Khafrē', who succeeded Khufu after one intervening reign, is also of vast proportions, while that of Menkaurē', who followed Khafrē', is on a much smaller scale. These pyramids were built as tombs in which the body of the Pharaoh would be preserved for ever intact, while against their eastern faces were erected funerary temples, where a permanent priesthood celebrated the services in which food and drink were offered for the sustenance of the dead king.

The area around the pyramids was given up to the tombs of the courtiers, who thus carried on in the next world their attendance upon the sovereign. These tombs, built in the shape of a bench (in Arabic, "*mastaba*"), are arranged in streets, so that the visitor finds himself walking in a veritable city of the dead. The whole complex of pyramid and surrounding tombs may be regarded as a concrete symbol of this first great period of civilisation in Egypt: Pharaoh, superhuman and supreme, ministered to by his noble servants. From these and other mastaba-tombs come the magnificent portrait-statues, so much treasured by museums, the faces of which suggest strong and well-balanced characters

allied with great dignity. The statue of Nenkheftka in the British Museum is one of the finest examples.

Thus the Old Kingdom was a period of prosperity and growth. At home the country enjoyed a stable and efficient government, and foreign relations were not neglected. Expeditions to the land of Punt were frequently dispatched, and made their way over land, or else through the Wadi Hamamat to the coast and then down the Red Sea. Military expeditions were conducted in Sinai (for the sake of the turquoise mines) and in Palestine. As early as the Third Dynasty wood for ship-building had been imported from Syria, while at the close of the Old Kingdom Egyptian ships were crossing the sea to Byblos, on the Syrian coast.

The end, however, was at hand. During the Sixth Dynasty a fatal weakening of the royal power set in, and the king was unable to exert proper control over his nobles who were by this time settled in their nomes as landed barons. The Sixth Dynasty closed in anarchy and confusion, during which it seems probable that Egypt was invaded by Asiatics from the north.

About a hundred years later, after a fierce struggle with the rulers of Heracleopolis, a town in Middle Egypt, the throne of Egypt was secured by the princely house of Hermonthis, in the neighbourhood of Thebes, and the Eleventh Dynasty was founded. With this house of kings the second great era of Egyptian civilisation began, called by Egyptologists the "Middle Kingdom," and the highest point was

## 8 EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

reached under the Pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty. The power of the feudal barons still remained a menace to the throne, but under the iron hand of the Twelfth Dynasty kings it was steadily diminished, until it seems to have been completely broken by Senusert III (Plate xxxvi). The latter monarch was renowned for his fierce and war-like spirit, inspired by which he defeated the rebellious negro tribes in the Sudan, and also conducted a campaign in Palestine. He was succeeded by Amenemhêt III (Plate xxxvii), under whom the prosperity of the Middle Kingdom rose to its greatest height. The most remarkable of this Pharaoh's works was the regulation of Lake Moeris in the Fayum. By means of a barrage he was able to control the outflow of its waters into the Nile, and with a dyke he reclaimed a large tract of land for cultivation. With the death of Amenemhêt III there set in a decline which ended in the usual anarchy, and about 1700 B.C. northern Egypt fell a prey to a great invasion of peoples from the north, the Hyksôs or "Shepherd Kings."

These foreign conquerors succeeded in holding northern Egypt for at least a hundred years, during which period they doubtless at times succeeded in extending their power over the native rulers of the south at Thebes. It was from Thebes, however, that deliverance finally came, and war was waged against the Hyksôs by three successive kings called Sekenenrê'. At last they were completely expelled and pursued into Palestine by Aahmose, son of

Sekenenrē' III, who founded the Eighteenth Dynasty, the most magnificent age in the history of ancient Egypt (1580-1321 B.C.).

The Hyksōs in their invasion had brought with them the horse and chariot, hitherto unknown in ancient Egypt. This instrument of warfare, combined with the martial spirit acquired from generations of conflict with their foreign oppressors, had awakened a new spirit in the Egyptians. From now on they turned longing eyes abroad, and under a series of energetic kings won for themselves a world-empire. The process was consummated by the illustrious Tuthmosis III, who subdued Palestine and Syria in a succession of sixteen yearly campaigns, and extended his power southward beyond the Third Cataract in Nubia. Nubia, Palestine and Syria were now organised as dependent provinces, vast quantities of tribute flowed into Egypt, and her power was recognised by the neighbouring kings of Babylon, Assyria and Mitanni.

As Pharaoh succeeded Pharaoh the prestige of Egypt was increased and her power consolidated. Thebes, the seat of the royal house, rose to the position of the principal city of the ancient world, and the temples of her god, Amon-Rē', who gave might and victory to Pharaoh his son, acquired titanic proportions. Amenhotep III, under whom the Eighteenth Dynasty reached its zenith of splendour, ruled Egypt as an international figure. His goodwill was eagerly sought by the kings of foreign countries, and he did not hesitate to marry foreign



princesses for reasons of policy. But his son, Amenhotep IV, was a religious reformer bent on reviving the worship of the ancient sun-god, and on overthrowing the god Amon who had usurped his place. At a time when the closest attention was required if the Asiatic empire was to be preserved intact Amenhotep IV changed his name to Akhenaten ("The Sun-disc is content"), closed the temples of Amon, and moved his capital northwards to a place now called Tell-el-'Amarneh (Plate xxxiv, figs 1-2). Here he built a city for himself and his court, and passed his time in religious services and other festivities of a more material nature, while the Empire in Syria was being destroyed by the southern advance of the Hittites and the invasion of tribes from the east, combined with the revolt of the Syrian dynasts themselves. When at last Akhenaten died, after a reign of about eighteen years, the Asiatic empire was considerably reduced.

The ephemeral kings who followed Akhenaten, Smenkhkarē, Tutankhamon and Ay, were succeeded by a man who was not, apparently, of royal blood, but whose strong hand brought the country back to normal. This monarch, Horemheb by name, spent his long reign in organising vigorous reforms throughout Egypt, and was thus able to prepare the way for his successors to regain their lost prestige in the world.

The Nineteenth Dynasty belongs to the period of the Second Empire, for, under Seti I and Rameses II, a series of campaigns was again conducted in Pales-

tine and Syria which re-established Egyptian control in the former region, although the Hittites were now too firmly entrenched in Syria to be dislodged. The best known event of these wars is the famous battle at Kadesh on the river Orontes, where Rameses II, through his own bad generalship, was nearly defeated by the Hittite forces. By personal gallantry, however, he saved the day, the battle ending in a draw. After many years of further warfare an elaborate peace treaty was finally drawn up between himself and the Hittite king.

Rameses was now free to spend the remainder of his reign in peaceful works, among which his building activities stand out as chief. In every part of Egypt temples were erected which bear testimony to his grandeur (Plate XXI, fig. 1), while far south in Nubia, at Abu Simbel, his four mighty statues, each sixty-five feet in height and carved out of the solid rock, gaze forever into the distance. The name of Rameses is seen inscribed on monuments throughout the length and breadth of Egypt, so that to the modern world he has become the most familiar of all the Pharaohs, while in ancient times, merged with the kings of the Twelfth Dynasty called Senusert, he passed into Greek tradition as the legendary Sesostris. He died after a reign of sixty-seven years.

With the reign of Merenptah, the son and successor of Rameses, the power of Egypt in the ancient East began to decay. In the fifth year of his reign he was called upon to meet an invasion from the

west of Libyan tribes, combined with wandering seafolk of the Mediterranean. The Egyptian Pharaoh inflicted a crushing defeat upon the invaders, but from this time onwards we see Egypt struggling to retain her empire and to preserve even herself from injury. Thirty years later matters came to a head in the reign of Rameses III, the second king of the Twentieth Dynasty, when attack after attack was launched upon Egypt by the Libyans and the peoples of the sea. Rameses, however, who was perhaps a greater soldier than even Tuthmosis III, was equal to his enemies, both defeating the confederacy in the Western Delta and beating back the hordes of the sea peoples who were advancing southward through Syria. The latter he utterly crushed on land and also in a sea-battle, the first recorded in history, which we can see to-day vividly depicted on the wall of Rameses' temple in Western Thebes. It seemed as if the glories of the past had returned and Egypt was once more supreme.

But this was not to be. For centuries the power of the priesthood of Amon-Rē' at Thebes had been steadily growing. Much of the vast quantities of foreign tribute which had poured into Egypt ever since the formation of her foreign empire had been assigned by the Pharaohs to the god Amon-Rē', until his priesthood became the wealthiest and most influential in the land. By now the High Priest of Amon had risen to a position of dangerous importance, and the end was inevitable. Rameses III was succeeded by eight kings of the same name, each

more ineffective than his predecessor, until about 1100 B.C. when the eleventh Rameses died, Herhor, High Priest of Amon-Rē' "King of gods," usurped the throne. The Delta had already revolted and set up a rival Pharaoh, the Asiatic empire was virtually no more, and only Nubia was still held.

For years the fortunes of Egypt were checkered in the extreme. She passed successively under three foreign dominations, a Libyan (Twenty-second Dynasty), a Nubian (Twenty-fifth Dynasty) and an Assyrian. The last seemed to spell complete ruin, for even "Thebes of the Hundred Gates" was sacked by the fierce armies of Ashurbanipal. Yet one more period of greatness awaited Egypt. Assyria became involved in the struggle with Babylon which was to end in her fall, her garrison was withdrawn from Egypt, and Psammetichus, a native prince of Saïs in the Delta, who had been viceroy, became independent, founding in 663 B.C. the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, the period called by us the "Renaissance."

The mind of Egypt had undergone a change. She had become retrospective, and her eyes were fixed on past glories which she strove with all her might to copy. The Egyptians of the Renaissance looked back beyond even the great days of the Empire, and took as their example the civilisation of the Old Kingdom. The art of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty aimed at reproducing the art of that period, ancient titles were revived, and early religious texts were

resurrected and carved once more on tombs and coffins.

But under this veil of archaism the Egypt of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty was new indeed. The ancient East had changed, and civilisation had already begun its march from east to west. The Greek world had come into being, Greek colonies were being formed everywhere, and Greek ships sailed in the Mediterranean. The Pharaohs of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty threw open the doors of Egypt to the Greek colonists, who settled in various parts of the country, their most famous centres being Naukratis and Daphnae. The Egyptian army was made up of Greeks, Carians, Syrians and Libyans, and Pharaoh did not hesitate to make foreign alliances for the purposes of war or trade. Thus a cosmopolitan state, entirely different from the exclusive Egypt of former times, was built up under these enlightened rulers, and the country soon attained a high level of prosperity. The Pharaohs were even able to think once more of empire in Asia, but here their efforts met with disastrous results, the final catastrophe being the defeat of Pharaoh Necho by the Babylonian prince, Nebuchadnezzar, at the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.). Henceforth Syria and Palestine were beyond recovery, and an effort made by Psammetichus II to regain lower Nubia had no lasting results.

This brief recrudescence of Egypt's glory was not destined to endure. The rise of Cyrus the Persian who passed from victory to victory sounded the death-knell of worn-out kingdoms, and soon, in

525 B.C., his successor, Cambyses, added Egypt to the Persian Empire. Although Egyptian religion and customs were fated to linger on further for many centuries under Persian, Macedonian and finally Roman domination, the history of ancient Egypt as an independent state had come to an end.

## CHAPTER I

### PHARAOH, THE "GOOD GOD"

ACROSS the dusty plain, as far as eye could see, stretched the columns of a great army on the march. In the forefront were the chariot regiments, and the thunder of wheels and horses' hooves almost drowned the shouted songs of the infantry trudging behind. Pharaoh was returning from a successful campaign in Syria, as he had returned so many times before, and his heart was full of triumph. He was driving his own splendid chariot, overlaid with gold and decorated with scenes of battle, and on his head the blue fighting-crown with its projecting snake of gold gleamed in the morning sun. By the side of the chariot, to which it was secured by a leash, trotted the king's pet lion which always accompanied him on his campaigns, and even fought beside him in battle.

Now, as he proceeded on his homeward journey, Pharaoh was reflecting on the struggles from which he had emerged victorious, and on the glorious feast of triumph which would soon be held at Thebes, when he would heap high the spoil before his father Amon-Rē', King of the Gods and Lord of Karnak (Plate 1, fig. 2). For had not Amon-Rē' wonderfully

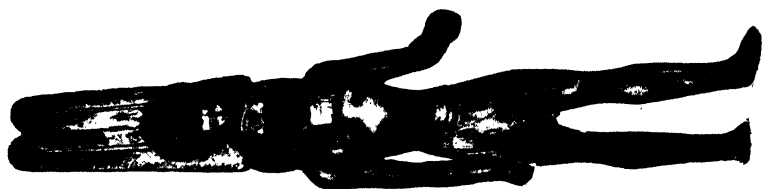
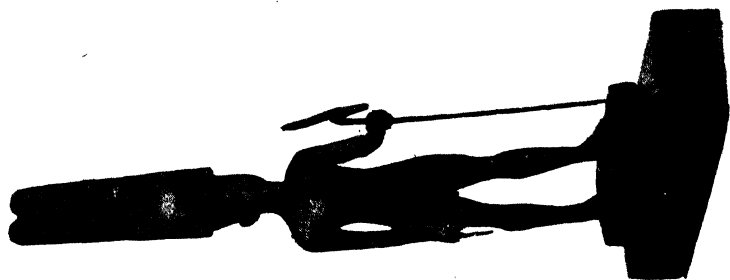
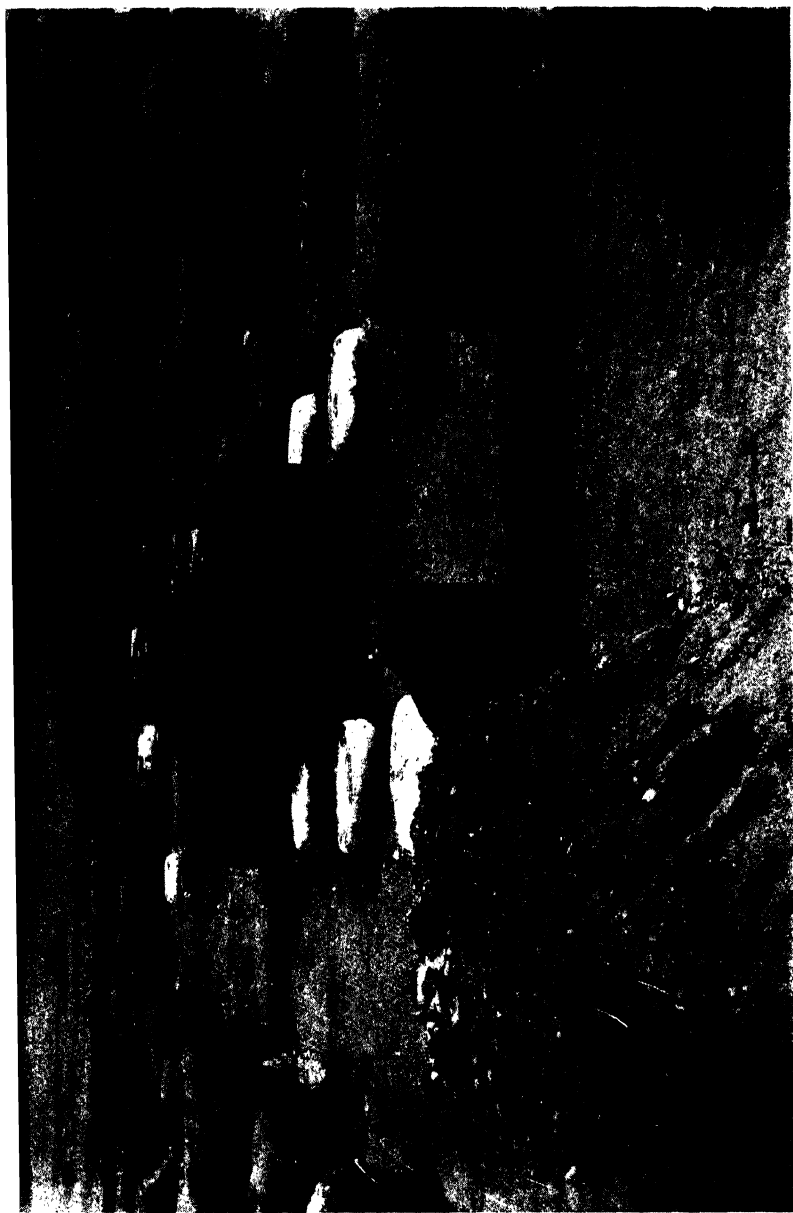


Fig. 1





supported him five days before, when Pharaoh and his household troops had been cut off by the foe from the rest of the army? For a brief moment it had seemed as if all was lost, but the son of Amon-Rē<sup>1</sup> prayed aloud to his divine father in the midst of the tumult, and straightway he saw the hand of his god stretched out to him. At once the Egyptian King regained his courage, and with a shout led his chariots in so violent an attack upon the enemy that the latter were hurled into the river. "I am as Menthu," he cried, "I shoot on the right hand and fight on the left hand; I am in their presence as Baal in his hour; I see that the two thousand five hundred chariots, in whose midst I was, lie cut to pieces before my steeds!"

But at this point Pharaoh's reminiscences were checked by sounds of cheering—the troops had caught sight of the frontier fortress of Thel rising in the distance, to them the door of Egypt. At once the soldiers broke into a run, and the officers had great difficulty in keeping order among the ranks until the outer rampart was reached. The fortress was built in two portions, on either side of a canal joining the two sheets of water which are known to-day as Lake Menzaleh and Lake Ballah. Military expeditions to Palestine and Syria generally started from Thel and returned to the same base, for the fortress commanded the most convenient road, and was also situated not far from the Pelusiatic branch of the Nile which flowed out to the sea through the

<sup>1</sup> See Plate I, fig. 1.

eastern delta. On this branch scores of troopships had been placed in readiness for the returning army, and on these, after a day's rest at Thel, the regiments embarked and the Nile voyage began.

As day succeeded day the cities of the Delta slipped by until at last the river turned southwards and faces were set towards Upper Egypt, where lay Thebes of the Hundred Gates. First of all came Memphis of the "white wall," the city of Ptah the artificer-god, which had once in bygone days been the capital of Egypt, and had been founded by Menes, the head of the first dynasty of kings. On the limestone plateau the pyramids of Khufu, Khafrē' and Menkaurē' raised their mighty bulk to heaven, glowing ruddy gold in the light of the setting sun which for a while made brilliant those dwellings of the dead. At Memphis it was arranged that Pharaoh should land and drive in state to the great temple of Ptah, where he would officiate at a thanksgiving service of victory, but we will leave this scene to the imagination, reserving ourselves for the more splendid spectacle at Thebes. One by one the cities of Upper Egypt were reached and passed, Assiut of the wolf-god, Upuaut; Abydos, the most sacred spot in Egypt, where was buried Osiris (Plate XVIII, fig. 1), god of the dead; Denderah of Hathor, gentle goddess of love and nursing-mother of kings; Coptos of Min, vigorous god of generation and fertility. Last of all came Thebes.

The great flotilla of boats which now sailed into the capital was preceded by two small rowing-boats

containing police, for the purpose of clearing all other vessels out of the way, although that proved hardly necessary, as the authorities of Thebes had already seen to it that the stream was clear. Next came the royal barge itself, on the deck of which, under a canopy, Pharaoh was seated. The blue crown rested on his head and he was clothed in the finest linen, carefully starched and goffered, the sleeves projecting stiffly beyond his arms. His feet were cased in gilded leather sandals, around his neck was a heavy collar of beads made of gold and semi-precious stones, and he held in his hands a wooden staff overlaid with gold and a mace with head of blue-veined alabaster. Around the throne were grouped the generals of the army and staff captains, still wearing their service uniform of a short linen kilt and a bronze corselet, and grasping spears and leopard-skin shields in their hands. These officers were, in turn, attended by their own personal servants carrying bows, quivers of arrows, and other accoutrements. But more striking to the beholder than even Pharaoh and his generals was the terrible appearance of the ship's prow, for there, attached head downwards over the water and struggling in agony, hung the seven Syrian chiefs who had rebelled against their lord. For them there was no hope, and as they played their miserable part in that pageant of triumph approaching doom was ever present to their minds.

And now cheer upon cheer went up from the closely packed crowds which thronged the river

banks as they caught sight of the Good God, the embodiment of Rē' who sat upon the Horus-throne of the living, and as his barge drew slowly nearer to the quay of Karnak. From this quay a processional road led towards the great temple of Amon-Rē' called "Elect-of-Places," flanked on either 'side by a row of stone sphinxes with the heads of rams, each holding a statue of Pharaoh between its paws. Beyond them could be seen the massive pylon towers which stood before the front court of the temple, and let into slots in their outer sloping faces stood tall flag-staves flying bright coloured pennons from their tops. This was the house of Amon-Rē' (Plate 1, fig 2), King of Gods, the state deity of Egypt, to whom all the empire paid homage. Once he had been merely a local deity of no very great importance, but with the accession of a Theban house of kings he had soon risen to the first place, which he now shared with Rē', the sun-god. In the dim ages of the past the sun-god, Rē'-Atum, had been the principal in Egypt's pantheon, but his place was now usurped by Amon, god of fertility and productivity, who, nevertheless, was forced to identify himself with the older deity in order to maintain his own position. Hence he became Amon-Rē', father of Pharaoh and himself a sun-god, with the largest temple and priesthood in the land.

It was this priesthood which was now assembled on the quay to welcome Pharaoh back to his capital city. In the front stood the High-Priest, Bakenkhonsu, dressed in spotless linen, his head, shaved

of every vestige of hair, gleaming in the sunlight, while attendants by means of fans prevented him from catching sunstroke. Behind the High Priest stood the Second and Third Priests, and further back the lower orders, together with a choir of priestesses carrying *sistra*<sup>1</sup> in their hands (Plate v, fig. 2). As the royal barge is moored to the quay they bend forward and raise their hands in adoration of the king's majesty, chanting an address antiphonally. "How splendid is he who returns in victory," intones Bakenkhonsu, and the priests reply, "For Amon hath caused him to smite the princes of Palestine!" "All folk, all folk of the House of Amon are in festival," "For Amon-Rē loveth the Ruler." Gangways are thrown across the water, and the beloved of the gods, surrounded by his bodyguard, steps ashore. Instantly the entire crowd falls prostrate "smelling the earth," excepting only the High Priest and his colleagues who remain bowed down in reverence. Looking straight before him Pharaoh walks towards the portable throne which awaits him, and, having mounted it, is borne aloft upon the shoulders of twelve nobles who count their task the most illustrious in the land. He is to lunch in the High Priest's house which adjoins the temple, after which he will cross the river to his palace on the western bank, there to rest before the arduous day of solemn festival which is to follow.

. . . . .  
<sup>1</sup> Sacred rattles.

The next day has dawned, and the brilliant colours attending Rē's appearance above the eastern mountains reflect the approaching triumph of his son, who yet sleeps within the palace. Contrary to our expectations we find that this latter is not built of massive stone, like the sanctuaries of the gods. Stone was far too precious to be used for secular buildings, and indeed was not so satisfactory from the Egyptian point of view as the mud-brick which was employed for all buildings other than religious. For the Egyptians preferred to dwell in light structures, capable of easy alteration and renewal. Thus Pharaoh's palace, which now stands before us, presents the appearance of a very large bungalow rather than of a mansion. The building is surrounded by stout enclosure-walls, in one of which is set a monumental gateway flanked by towers and guarded by soldiers. In the palace itself are many pillared halls, the most splendid being the Hall of Audience (Plate II), where the king's throne is set upon, a daïs approached by a flight of steps, beneath a canopy. Situated over the palace gateway, between the pylons, is the balcony or "Window of Appearing," where Pharaoh shows himself to the multitude on great occasions, and from which he throws down rewards of golden jewellery to his faithful servants below. Throughout the palace the mud-brick walls are carefully plastered and painted with bright designs, festoons of flowers and fruit mingled with ducks hanging head downwards forming the principal motif, while the floors are beautifully coloured to

represent lakes in which delicate water lilies and gleaming fish thrive in abundance.

The king has just awakened, and immediately a cry goes up which is repeated from mouth to mouth: "The Good God is awake! The Good God is awake!" and scores of officials and servants hasten busily to their tasks. Assisted by a venerable chamberlain, who carries an ebony staff topped with a knob of blue glazed faïence, Pharaoh makes his toilet, and finally, clad in white linen and wearing on his head only a short black wig and gold *uraeus*, proceeds to his morning devotions in the private chapel. This attractive structure stands in the palace grounds and is built in the form of a rectangular kiosk, approached by a flight of steps. Here Pharaoh kneels to adore Rē'-Horakhte at his rising, reciting prayers also to Amon and Mūt of Thebes, and again to their child, Khonsu the prince-god, whose twin brother he was believed to be.

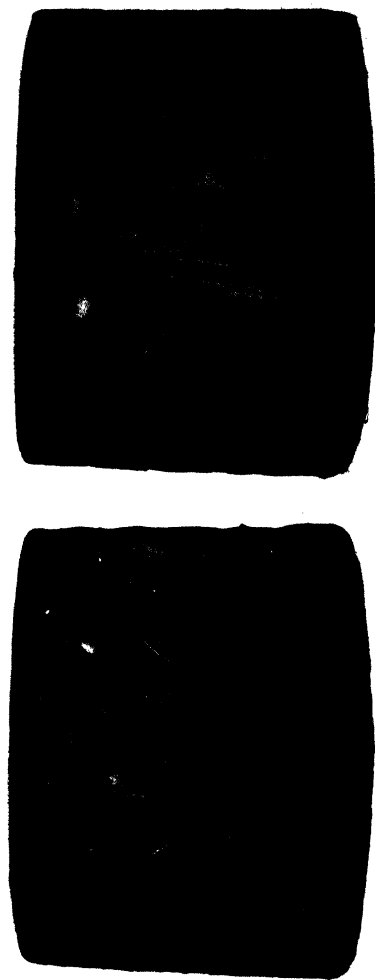
His prayers finished, the king is escorted to the breakfast-room where he partakes of a light meal, before the end of which, however, a servant announces that the Grand Vizier and the Chancellor await an audience. They have come especially early in order to see the king before the celebrations begin, wishing to secure the royal assent in urgent matters of state which demand Pharaoh's attention on his return from abroad. With a gesture of resignation the king leaves his unfinished meal and passes to the Hall of Audience, where he takes his place upon the throne. First he receives the



## 24 EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Vizier, who reports on the country's prosperity, explains various schemes for improved irrigation which have been recently drawn up, and finally presents a list of prisoners awaiting capital punishment, who cannot be executed until Pharaoh has confirmed their sentence. After the Vizier's departure the monarch is closeted with the Chancellor for a further half-hour, discussing the state of the government finances and probable scales of taxation to be adopted in the coming year. At last the two statesmen have departed and the king is free. Immediately two expert dressers conduct him to a robing-room where he is made ready for his day of triumph. First they fit around his waist a short skirt of embroidered cloth of gold, the dress of kings and gods since primitive times, and over this a long skirt of transparent but stiffly goffered linen. From his girdle there hangs in front, over his skirt, a splendid ornament of coloured beads from the bottom of which a golden cobra wearing the solar disc curves up on either side, and behind him is attached a long piece of material fashioned to imitate the tail of a wild animal. Around his neck the attendants place a collar of gold and carnelian beads, and on his arms gorgeous bracelets of solid gold inlaid with coloured frit and semi-precious stones, showing the infant god Harpocrates seated upon a lotus (Plate III).

The royal feet are cased in gilded leather sandals, and the blue crown is set upon his head. Holding a staff of wood covered with gold and a ceremonial



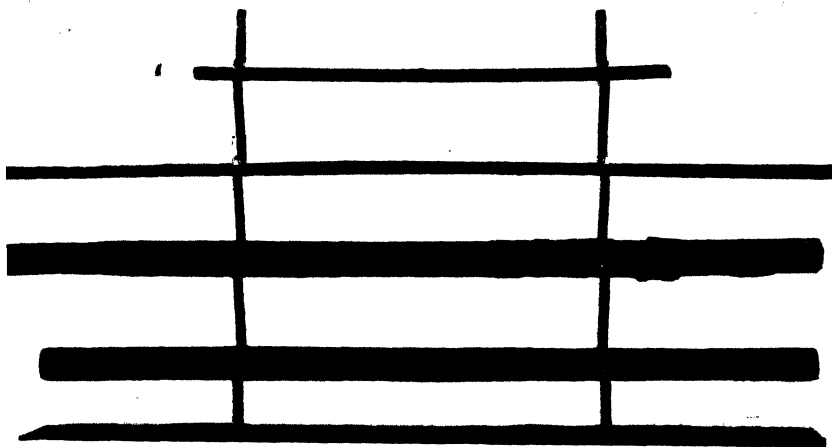
PAIR OF GOLD BRACELETS INLAID WITH LAPIS LAZULI AND BLUE FRIT, OF THE XXIIID DYNASTY  
The design shows the god Harpokrates seated upon a lotus, between two *uraei* wearing discs  
*British Museum No. 14394-5.*



*Fig. 1*

BRONZE CENSER [*British Museum No. 41606*]

The Incense was burnt in the large cup, and a supply was kept in the receptacle in the middle.



*Fig 2*

EGYPTIAN FLUTES IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

mace Pharaoh walks out to his chariot, surrounded by his bodyguard and closely attended by a large and fleshy personage who proves to be the Lord High Steward of the Palace. As he passes through one of the pillared halls he stops to greet the queen and her women, who have emerged from that portion of the palace where, like all Oriental women, they live in seclusion. The queen is attired for the festival; she will not accompany Pharaoh, however, but is to proceed with her train direct to the temple of Karnak, where she will officiate as High Priestess during the ceremonies. As Pharaoh approaches she kneels reverently before him, but at once he bids her rise, his smiling eyes telling plainly how he loves her. But the next moment his brow clouds, for he notices that only a few of the lesser wives and concubines are present to salute him. "Where are the others?" he asks the queen. In answer she reddens, and whispers so that no one else may hear: "It is Nebt-taui, I know it. She is ever stirring up mischief among them. She has persuaded them to stay within." Pharaoh turns away without a word, but his face wears a frown as he walks towards the portal. Scarcely heeding the cheers of the crowd, which has been waiting outside the palace gates since dawn to catch a glimpse of the king, he mounts his chariot and the cortège starts for the river.

After a short time the procession reaches the quay, opposite the temple of Luxor, where the royal barge is waiting. At once Pharaoh embarks, and his boat, rowed by brawny oarsmen, proceeds downstream to

Karnak, accompanied by a flotilla carrying officials of the court, river police and military detachments. The river-banks, too, are crowded with men, women and children, the inhabitants of Thebes, and also by many regiments of soldiers who line the stream on either side. Among the latter are warriors from the Egyptian empire abroad as well as from Egypt itself, bearded Libyans and coal-black negroes, and even some mercenaries from among the sea-folk of the Mediterranean, the Shardana, with their horned helmets and heavy triangular swords. The Egyptian troops carry curious ensigns which distinguish the different regiments; some are in the form of large ceremonial fans adorned with the King's name, others resemble a sort of flail hanging from a long pole. As the boats journey past the city of Thebes towards Karnak the soldiers run along the banks, cheering their lord with wild enthusiasm, the battle-shouts of the Egyptian regiments mingling with savage howls from the blacks and Libyans.

When at length the temple of Amon-Rē' at Karnak is reached and the sovereign has landed, he is borne rapidly on a portable throne through the pylon gates and the front portion of the temple to a certain chamber, situated near the Holy of Holies, called "The House of the Morning," where his attendants leave him in the charge of two waiting priests. This room is the vestry where the king, who is to act to-day as High Priest, must first undergo important preparatory ceremonies. As he stands there amid the silence of the vast temple

he is suddenly aware that two more persons have entered the vestry, at whose appearance the heart may well tremble with fear, for one man has the head of an ibis with long curved beak, and the other the head of a hawk. They are priests, wearing cunningly fashioned masks, who impersonate the hawk-god, Horus, and ibis-headed Thōth, god of wisdom. Silently they take their places on either side of Pharaoh, while an attendant priest hands to them vessels of water drawn from the sacred lake within the temple precincts. They are going to work upon the King a magical rite so powerful that it will cause him to be born anew, even as his father Rē', the sun-god, is reborn every morning at dawn after being bathed by Horus and Thōth.

Solemnly they sprinkle water over the king, chanting the words of the ritual as they do so. The water-vessels are then laid aside, and censers (Plate IV, fig. 1) are given to Horus and Thōth who proceed to fumigate the king with incense-smoke, and finally present him with balls of natron (soda) to chew in order that the words of the liturgy, soon to be pronounced by him, may be free from all earthly defilement.

The divinities then leave the House of the Morning and their place is taken by Bakenkhonsu, High Priest of Amon, who approaches Pharaoh with a profound reverence and conducts him towards the most sacred part of the building, the inner sanctuary or Holy of Holies where the image of the god is kept. There, behind closed doors, Pharaoh beholds the face of his

father, Amon-Rē', and performs upon his image those mysterious rites of which we shall read in a later chapter (see pages 72-3).

Pharaoh and the High Priest now return to the House of the Morning to make ready for the supreme event of this festival of victory, the deed which shall strike dread into the heart of subject countries. Attendant officials remove the outer linen skirt from the king, leaving him clad only in the simple kilt, the dress of the gods. They next take from his head the blue crown which he has worn hitherto, and in its place set the red and white Double Crown. In the dim ages of the past, when Egypt was divided into two countries, the north and the south, the king of Upper Egypt had worn a white crown, somewhat like a tall sugar-loaf cap with a bulbous top, while the king of Lower Egypt had worn a red crown of curious shape. But ever since the two countries had been united under one ruler, the king of Egypt has worn both crowns together, the white inside the red.

Crowned, then, with the diadem of his ancestors, and grasping in his hand a mace with head of alabaster, the king leaves the vestry and, accompanied by the High Priest, the Second Priest and lesser clergy, makes his way to the hypostyle hall. In this great hall, where immense columns sculptured with scenes of gods and kings tower up to the roof on every side, illumined by shafts of daylight streaming in through the clerestory windows, a large assembly is collected. In the forefront is the queen, accompanied by the concubine priestesses, holding in their

hands *sistra* which tinkle when they move. In a group apart stand the highest ministers of the State, the Vizier, the Chancellor, the heads of government departments and the chief generals of the army. Another group contains important clergy who have travelled from their own cities to be present at the festival, the most illustrious being the High Priest of Rē -Atum at Heliopolis, known as "The Great Seer," and the High Priest of Ptah at Memphis, known as "The Chief of the Master-workmen." Behind these noble persons the hall is densely packed with lesser dignitaries, while outside the open court is filled by the common people, allowed entrance thereto by special favour on this joyful occasion.

Pharaoh and Bakenkhonsu now take up their positions on the right of the door leading towards the sanctuary, and, in a few minutes, priests appear in that doorway carrying the sacred boat of the god upon their shoulders. It is a wonderful piece of craftsmanship, the prows carved in the likeness of rams' heads, and the cabin in the centre, where the divine image stands, decorated with rows of deities in relief and shrouded with a veil. The whole boat is overlaid with gold leaf from which the sacred Eye of Horus, inlaid on either side in coloured stones and glass, glitters in the dim light.

Motionless stand the priests with the barque upon their shoulders; the god has come from his shrine to witness some event, and is waiting for it to take place. A silence seems to have descended on the multitude as they, too, wait. Suddenly a



clank of spears is heard, and into the hall marches a body of soldiers, dragging with them the seven captive chieftains from Syria who had been fastened to the bows of Pharaoh's ship the day before. Now they stand, their hands bound in agonising positions, their richly dyed robes dirty and torn, their hair and beards ragged and unkempt. Yet withal they do not show any sign of fear, they know well how to die.

The horrible spectacle does not last long. One by one the chiefs are forced to their knees before the king, who, grasping them by their hair, smashes in their heads with his mace, until seven lifeless bodies lie on the stone floor, swimming in blood. Then at last the queen and her priestesses jangle their *sistra* wildly, and the silence is broken by the roar of approbation from the assembled company which resounds through the great hall and is taken up by the crowds outside, a sound which is not good to hear. Swiftly the priests turn and bear the sacred boat back to the sanctuary. Amon-Rē' is content with the sacrifice offered by his son—the festival is over.

. . . . .

In a room of one of the outbuildings belonging to the palace, late at night, two men were seated talking—Penamon, the Lord Chamberlain, and Hori, a royal butler. They spoke in very low voices, and continually glanced at the door as if expecting someone. The Lord Chamberlain was an old man, heavily built, with deep sunken eyes and a face covered with a network of tiny wrinkles. His staff of office was propped against the wall, near the door.

The other man, Hori, was in his prime, with clear-cut features and eyes of peculiar brilliance and penetration. Neither of the two seemed at his ease, and, when a soft knocking on the door was heard, both men sprang to their feet as if their nerves were on edge. Although the door was bolted they made no attempt to open it, but stayed motionless, listening intently. "It is a clear night and Nūt shows her stars," came in a whisper from outside, and immediately Penamon and Hori opened the door and admitted the stranger, whose head and shoulders were enveloped in a cloak. As the wrapping slipped away and revealed the identity of the visitor the two officials bowed low in reverence, and prayed him to be seated.

The stranger was a young man of twenty-two years, dressed in finely woven linen and with a golden dagger stuck into his girdle. His face was pleasant to look at, with fine eyes and regular features, but a mouth which suggested weakness rather than strength. The most remarkable point in his appearance, however, was his head-covering of richly embroidered cloth from which a flap hung down on one side. This flap took the place, at this period, of the sidelock of plaited hair which denoted a royal prince, and indeed the late visitor was none other than Amenemuā, second son of Pharaoh, and nearest to the throne of Egypt, save for his elder brother, the Crown Prince Meryamon.

"What news, my lord?" asked Penamon eagerly.  
"Does all go well?"

"Excellent progress has been made," replied Amenemuā, and as he spoke his eyes lighted up with excitement. "Only for a few days longer will my father rule as Pharaoh and weary Egypt with burdens which it cannot bear! It had been better if the gods, his fathers, had taken him unto themselves twenty years ago, when the land resounded with the glory of his campaigns, ere it had time to grow sullen with hatred of an old man's rule. My mother, Nebt-taui, has passed the message throughout all the harem so that now every woman knows that a week hence, when Rē' has dipped behind the western hills and night covers the earth, Pharaoh will cease to live!"

"You have done well, my lord," replies Penamon, "and the hour when we shall set the Double Crown upon your head seems not far distant. But what of the letter which the concubine Ast was to have conveyed to her brother, the captain of the regiment of archers stationed on the west bank?"

"He has received it safely," answered the Prince. "With the troops on this side of the river disaffected in our favour it is not likely that my brother Meryamon will be able to resist. Pharaoh will be dead and my brother missing before dawn comes. It should not then be difficult to win over the rest of the army; provided it is well paid it does not care over much who rules, and already the soldiers have many grievances against my father. But now let us consider that other matter which

is most vital to our plan. Have you obtained the instruments of magic, Hori?"

For answer Hori produced from the folds of his robe a bundle wrapped in linen, which he began to unroll with great care. First of all he took out a roll of papyrus tied with string, to which was attached a clay seal, and placed it before Amenemuā.

"This precious roll, my lord," he said, "came from the library of the temple of Ptah at Memphis, and was obtained at great risk by a member of that college known to me. It contains a spell so powerful that he who pronounces it will enchant heaven and earth and bend the gods to his own will. It is a spell which Thōth wrote with his own hand. If we recite it on the evening of our venture we shall not fail to be victorious."

Hori next took from the bundle a number of small waxen figures, moulded in the form of men, and laying them before the Prince said: "To-night we shall begin to work magic with these. Let us lose no time." So saying he handed sharp bronze needles both to the Prince and to Penamon and also one of the waxen figures to each person, and proceeded to chant:

"The flame of the Eye of Horus consumes the enemies of  
Rē'!

The spear of Horus destroys the enemies of Rē'!

O guardians of Pharaoh's bedchamber, ye are over-  
thrown!

Perish and fall to the ground! Waste away and become  
feeble!

The spear of Horus hath destroyed you!"

At the last words Amenemuā, Penamon and Hori plunged their needles into the soft waxen figures, believing that at the same time the unfortunate bodyguard of Pharaoh would actually feel the pangs of some mortal illness and before long perish miserably.

"It is well," said the Prince, when this was finished, "I must leave you now and return to the palace before my absence causes suspicion. I will visit you again to-morrow at the same hour," and he rose to go. But Hori laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

"My lord has not seen all the figures which I have obtained. There is yet this," and he drew from his bundle a figure larger than the rest and placed it in the hand of Amenemuā, at the same time looking intently at him with his piercing eyes. For a moment it seemed as if the Prince was going to faint, he grasped the back of his chair for support and his knuckles showed white under the tightened skin as he gazed fascinated at the figure, an exquisitely modelled statuette of *Pharaoh himself*. The two officials scarcely breathed as they watched the Prince contemplating this instrument of his divine father's doom, but even as they watched his lips set firm and a glitter came into his eyes. Suddenly he picked up one of the bronze needles and struck it deep into the breast of the figure, gasping out the words:

"Perish and fall to the ground! Waste away and become feeble!

The spear of Horus hath destroyed thee!"

For a moment longer he held the mutilated figure in his hand, then, with a stifled sob, let it fall to the ground, wrenched open the door and vanished into the darkness.

Four days later the plot was betrayed by a servant who had not received all the payment which he demanded for his part in the undertaking. All the conspirators were immediately arrested and the trial was at once instituted by Pharaoh himself. Let us describe the scene which took place only a week after that fateful evening on which Amenemuā visited Penamon, the Lord Chamberlain, and Hori, the royal butler.

Owing to the fact that the plot had been aimed at the sacred person of the king himself the opening stage of the trial took place in the audience-hall of the royal palace. The judges had assembled to receive their commission from the hands of Pharaoh, and when the time for the audience had arrived the room was filled with high members of the government and of the court, standing in groups and discussing the situation in low tones. The bench of judges specially constituted to try the case consisted of two "overseers of the White House," that is, officials in charge of the treasury, two scribes, five butlers and a herald representing the Court, and two standard bearers representing the army.

They had not long to wait, for very soon two heralds appeared on either side of the doorway and proclaimed that the Good God was approaching,

the assembled judges bowed low in reverence and Pharaoh entered the hall.

But how changed is the person of the Good God since that day, twenty years ago, when we witnessed his festival of victory in the temple of Amon-Rē! Then he was in the prime of his manly strength, abounding in health and vigour. Now it is an ageing man that we see before us, waxed gross with years of inaction, and with a weary dullness in his eyes. Moreover, he does not seem in good health, for he breathes painfully and leans on his gilded staff with undue heaviness. Slowly he walks towards the daïs (Plate II) and seats himself upon the throne, where he rests in silence for a few minutes, contemplating the officials who stand bowed and motionless before him. The double crown upon his head indicates that this occasion is one of supreme state importance (*Frontispiece*).

At last Pharaoh rises to speak, and briefly outlines the events which have led him to summon these high officials to his presence. At times his voice falters with emotion, as when he mentions the name of his son, Amenemuā, who sought to compass his father's death, or that of Nebt-tauī, the queen who had schemed to take the lives of Pharaoh and of his eldest son in order that her own child might sit upon the throne. As the king continued speaking no member of his audience failed to realise how gravely affected Pharaoh was by this conspiracy. He had been wounded in the house of his friends, and in his failing health it had proved a deadly

blow. His final words to the court, in which he charged them with the conduct of the trial, showed that he could not bear even to hear the result.

"As for the statements which the parties have made, I know them not. Go ye and examine them. When ye have examined them, let the guilty die by their own hand without my knowing it. Ye shall execute punishment upon the others, likewise without my knowing it. But see to it that ye give heed, and take care lest ye execute punishment upon any person unjustly.

"Now, I say to you in very truth, as for all that has been done, and those who have done it, let all that they have done fall upon their own heads, while I am protected and defended forever, while I am among the just kings who are before Amon-Rē', King of Gods, and before Osiris, Ruler of eternity!"<sup>1</sup>

When Pharaoh had left the audience-hall an excited murmur rose among the judges. Why that strange reference to Osiris, god of the dead, in the king's closing words? They were to know in ten days' time, for on the morning when, in accordance with the judgment of the court, Prince Amenemuā hanged himself, and Queen Nebt-taui drank a poisoned draught, a cry went up from the king's bedchamber: "The Good God is dead! Pharaoh has flown to heaven and united with the sun! He reigns in the Kingdom of Osiris!"

<sup>1</sup> Based on translation by Prof. Breasted in "Ancient Records."



## CHAPTER II

### SPORT AND PLEASURE

THE young man, Nekht, in official life known as "the General of the army of the Lord of the Two Lands," had taken three days' holiday. His regiment had returned with Pharaoh from the season's campaign in Syria only a short time before, and consequently he now found himself possessed of some leisure. Nekht, however, was not one to waste his opportunities, and every free day was spent in the pleasant occupation of hunting, or in the still more pleasant occupation of courting the maiden, Nezmet, daughter of Zed-Khonsu, to whom he had lost his heart.

And so we find him this morning setting out for a day's sport in the company of certain other noblemen, as soon as the sun has risen. They have pitched their tents on the high desert which stretches from the hills behind Thebes towards the Red Sea, several days' march away. Good hunting was to be found there in ancient times, although now the animals have vanished to more southerly regions; gazelles and ibex abounded, and even lions and leopards roamed abroad, although our friends are not to-day out for such formidable quarry. The

party arrived the day before the hunt, and the beaters have spent the intervening time in erecting a light network to enclose a considerable area of ground, one side being left open. Into this enclosure they will drive all the wild animals that can be found for the sport of their masters.

All being now ready, Nekht and his friends take up their stand near the entrance of the enclosure, the beaters having dispersed over the surrounding desert in various directions in order to scare up as much game as possible and head it off towards them. Nekht and the other sportsmen string their powerful bows, see that their servants are standing ready with quivers full of arrows, and wait.

Presently the distant barking of the beaters' hounds is heard, showing that the latter have started up some desert creatures, and soon an ibex and a gazelle are seen racing madly over the sand and boulders towards the enclosure, with hounds and men in full cry behind them. The chief huntsman has placed his men well, and by dint of loud shouting on their part and efficient manœuvres on the part of the hounds the luckless animals are driven into the enclosure.

Now is the time for Nekht and his friends! Into the enclosure they dash and let fly a hail of arrows at their quarry. The gazelle falls at once, pierced through the heart, but the ibex is only wounded and rushes about bleating with pain. The hounds, however, who are close on his heels, soon pull him

down, and burying their teeth into the creature's throat complete the archers' work.

In this manner the morning's sport proceeds, the bag including another gazelle, two more ibex, three wild goats and a couple of hares. The party has earned its lunch, and turns its footsteps towards camp, where rest and shade may be found for the midday meal.

The above description suffices to show the sort of hunting in which the average man of wealth was able to indulge, but sometimes more ambitious hunters went in search of larger game. Chief of all sportsmen was the Pharaoh, who delighted to take advantage of foreign campaigns to amuse himself with hunting when fighting was not the order of the day. When the great conqueror, Tuthmosis III, was in the neighbourhood of Niy, in northern Syria, he engaged in an elephant hunt on an enormous scale, one hundred and twenty of the beasts being attacked. The life of the king himself was seriously endangered in the course of the drive by an infuriated elephant, but he was rescued by one of his generals, called Amenemheb, who dashed forward and cut off its trunk, for which deed he was nobly rewarded by Tuthmosis.

Another great hunter was Amenhotep III, called by historians to-day "the magnificent," and possibly the father of Tutankhamen. So proud was he of his lion-hunts that he caused a special series of glazed stone scarabs to be made, inscribed on the base in the following manner:

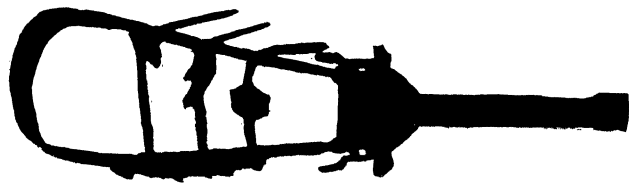
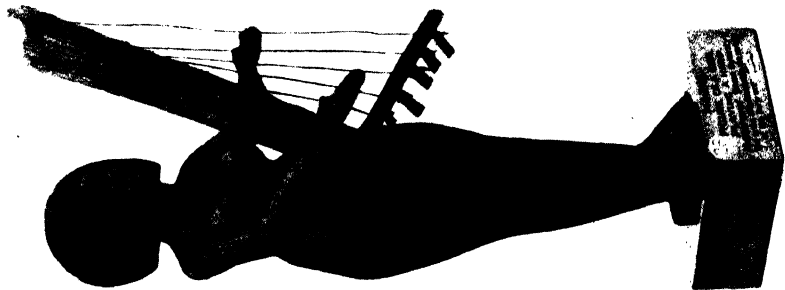


Fig 2

BRONZE SISTRUM [British Museum No. 36310]



Fresco from a Tomb, showing an Egyptian Noble engaged in fowling, accompanied

“The Horus: mighty bull appearing in Truth;  
The Two Ladies: establisher of laws, pacifier of the Two  
Lands;  
The Horus of Gold: great of strength, smiter of the  
Asiatics;  
The King of Upper and Lower Egypt; Neb-Maât-Rē’;  
Son of Rē’, Amenhotep-heka-Uast, given life;  
Also the great Royal Wife, Tiye (may she live!);  
Statement of lions which his majesty brought back by his  
own shooting, from the first year up to the tenth year:  
102 fierce lions.”

The same enthusiastic monarch carried out a great hunt of wild cattle in the delta during the second year of his reign, and this event also was recorded on the base of a scarab now in the British Museum:

“In the second year under the Majesty of the living Horus, etc.<sup>1</sup> a marvellous thing which happened unto his Majesty: one came to announce to his Majesty (saying): ‘There are wild cattle in the desert of the district of Shetp!’

His Majesty voyaged downstream in the royal barge ‘Kha-em-maât’ at the time of evening, and after a prosperous journey arrived in peace at the district of Shetp at the time of day-break. His Majesty mounted a chariot, with all his troops following him, and the captains and soldiers of the entire army and the children of the district were directed to keep watch over the wild cattle.

Now his Majesty commanded that these cattle should be surrounded by a wall with a ditch. His Majesty commanded to count (?) all these wild cattle.

Statement thereof: 170<sup>2</sup> wild cattle. Statement of those which his Majesty brought in by hunting on this day: 56 wild cattle.”

<sup>1</sup> Titles of Amenhotep III and of Queen Tiye as before.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the total number trapped in the enclosure for the king’s sport.

After four days' rest Amenhotep went forth a second time and captured (or slaughtered?) yet more of the beasts.

. . . . .

Nekht and his friends had arranged a hippopotamus hunt for the day following their sport in the desert, an exciting but somewhat dangerous performance. Each member of the party was armed with a special hippopotamus harpoon—a long wooden shaft with a metal blade fastened to the end. This blade was detachable from the shaft, and to it was tied a length of cord which ran along the shaft and over a hook or fork at the butt. As soon as one of the great river-horses was seen to rise to the surface of the water to take breath everyone hurled his harpoon at any visible part of the creature. The blades sank deep into hide and flesh, and a jerk sufficed to detach the shafts, leaving the sportsmen holding the cords attached to the blades. As the hippopotamus, frightened by the pain, dived beneath the water, the cords were let out until it rose once again to breathe, when more harpoons were hurled at it. In this way, after a considerable lapse of time, the hippopotamus became so weakened by loss of blood that the hunters were able to draw it onto the bank and despatch it. The quarry, however, was sometimes known to retaliate by charging its persecutors, and the latter had, therefore, to be constantly on the look-out for such a danger.

Although the Egyptians were so devoted to hunting

of all kinds it did not follow that they were always free to indulge in that pleasure. Every "nome"<sup>1</sup> had its sacred animal, and woe betide the careless sportsman who, while in that part of Egypt, persecuted that particular species. It would have been considered impious, for instance, to go hunting crocodile in a district where Sebek, the crocodile-god, was venerated as chief local deity, and such a crime was quite probably punishable with death. Hence it was necessary to exercise care lest the sacrosanct prohibitions of religion were disobeyed.

The third and last day of his short vacation the young man Nekht had set aside for fowling (Plate VI), a pleasant sport which could be had anywhere along the marshy borders of the Nile. Taking a small boat, made of papyrus stalks lashed together and therefore very light, he set out alone, carrying with him only a little food, the necessary weapons, and a large tortoiseshell cat!

After about half an hour's paddling he came to a part of the marshes where the stems of papyrus grew thick and high, affording ample cover, and thrust the nose of his skiff among them until he had quietly worked his way into their midst. Then, rising to his feet in the boat, he selected a number of wooden sticks, curved in a special way, some of them ending in a snake's head. Holding three or four of these ready in his left hand he grasped one of them in his right hand and shouted.

<sup>1</sup> The districts into which Egypt was divided were called by the Greeks "nomes."



At once the air resounded with the whirr of many wings as birds of different sorts, ducks, herons, pigeons and others, rose into the air startled by the sudden noise. The very moment, however, at which they were visible Nekht hurled his throwstick among them, and afterwards as many as he could of those which he had in reserve before the birds had gone. The sticks flew from his hand with a curious twisting motion and knocked down several birds, which fell back stunned or with damaged wings into the papyrus clumps. Now was the time for the cat, which leaped from the skiff onto the clumps and retrieved the game for her master, of course without getting wet (Plate VI).

And so the sport went on, until the nearness of Rē' to the summit of the western hills warned the hunter that he had best return before he was caught by the sudden chill of evening. Nekht, therefore, carefully tied his "bag" together and paddled back to the city, where, having left his boat with the man from whom he had hired it, he made his way to the officers' quarters in order to get himself ready for the supper party to which he had been invited by Nesamon.

Since the death of her mother and father Nezmēt had come to live at the house of her uncle Nesamon, who was the Chief Architect of Pharaoh and therefore one of the most important men in Thebes. At present he was engaged in supervising the erection of a new building within the precinct of Amon's temple at Karnak, and among the guests

invited to supper on this evening were the High Priest of Amon and the Second Priest, together with several important officials connected with the temple.

Nesamon's house was built at the northern end of Thebes, and as he had not been cramped for space he had been able to build a house of the most roomy and luxurious type. Let us walk through it and study it in detail (see Plates VII-X).

The general appearance of the house is that of a very large bungalow, built of sun-dried mud brick. The house is surrounded by a brick wall, through which a small pylon gateway, plastered white and painted in bright colours, gives access to the garden and outbuildings.

The front door of the house (Plate IX, fig. 2.) is on the north side, and is approached by a flight of shallow steps. After entering, the visitor finds himself in the porter's lodge (1)<sup>1</sup>, from which he passes to a vestibule (2) and thence to a long room (3), the roof of which is supported by wooden pillars resting on limestone bases, light being obtained through grille windows (Plate IX, fig. 1) set high up in the outer wall. Throughout the house the walls are covered with mud plaster on which brilliant coloured designs have been executed. This northern room is decorated with a frieze imitating the grille windows by means of dummy bars of mud plaster applied to the wall and coloured. Over the door leading further into the house is painted a garland design, such as will be described later.

<sup>1</sup> This and following numbers refer to rooms on the plan, fig. 2, Plate VII.

Through this door we pass into the central room (8) (Plates VII, fig. 1, VIII and X), the main room of the house, the ceiling of which rests upon four slender columns with tops carved as lotus flowers. This room is built higher than the rest of the house so that light may be obtained through clerestory windows pierced in the walls at the top. On one side of the room is a low brick platform built on the floor against the wall; on this the master's chair is placed, or, if covered with a rug and cushions, it provides a sort of divan. On the other side of the room is another platform with floor of cut stone, having a stone coping round it and a back screen of the same material (see Plate x). This is the ablution-platform where people wash before meals, helping themselves to water out of a large jar which stands ready. In the floor of the room a shallow pottery pan is set in a bed of brickwork; this is used as a brazier for warming the room during the cold evenings.

Around the room, on the upper portion of the mud-plastered walls, designs have been executed in bright colours, reproducing garlands of flowers and fruit. Each garland consists of rows of lotus petals, white turning to blue at the tips, red poppy petals, blue cornflowers and the yellow fruits of the mandrake, while combined with poppy flowers and hanging head downward from the outer edge of the garland are dead ducks, their heads painted green and red.

The roofs of the rooms throughout the house

consist of palm-ribs combined with mud and laid flat upon rafters, the latter being coated with mud plaster and painted. In the central room the main beam is decorated with a block-pattern of red, blue, green and yellow, the other rafters are coloured orange, while the ceiling is white-washed.

From the central room two doors lead to a *loggia* (9) situated on the west side of the house, where the family can sit on winter days and take the air without feeling the chill winds which blow at that time of year. Another door leads to a room resembling the central room but much smaller (16); this is the living room of the women, whose quarters are situated on this side of the house.

The bedroom (21) of the master himself is carefully designed, the walls being thickened around the raised platform where the bed is placed so that he shall not feel the cold in winter or excessive heat in summer. The bed itself is made of linen mesh fastened in a framework of wood. The feet are carved in the form of lion's feet, and the end-board is decorated with figures of the god Bes and the goddess Taurt. The bed does not rest on the ground, the feet being placed on small limestone supports. The pillow used on the bed is made of wood or ivory (Plate XIII, fig. 1), an object which is not in accordance with our idea of comfort.

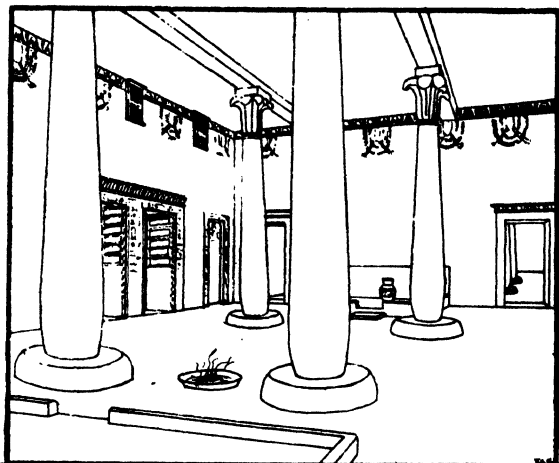
Next to the master's bedroom is the bathroom. There is no such thing as a bath in our sense of the word, the person who wants to wash simply stands on a stone platform with a raised edge, while a

servant pours over him warm water which runs away through a drainage hole into a large pot sunk in the floor. It must be remembered that to the Oriental the idea of getting into the water in which he washes is disgusting; he prefers it to be poured over him so that it can carry the dirt away. The floor and walls of the bathroom are covered with cement plaster so as to withstand splashing. Next to the bathroom is a simple earth-closet with a seat of carved limestone.

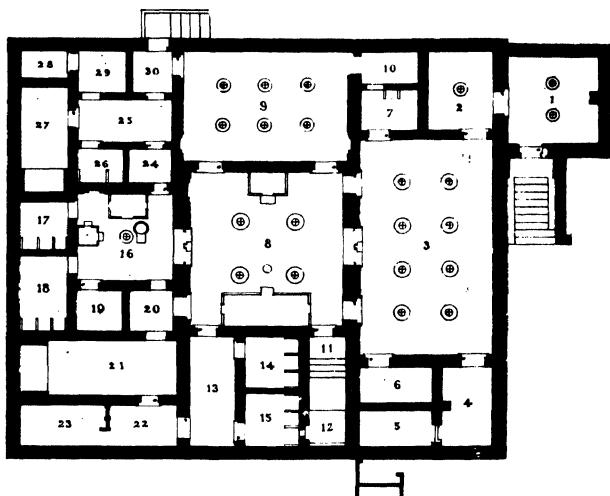
A door from the east side of the central room gives on to a staircase (II) leading up to the first floor, where is a *loggia* which runs along the front of the house. This is a favourite place for the women to sit during the daytime. The house is surrounded by a wall which encloses the outbuildings—kitchens, store-rooms, granaries, servants' quarters and stables, and also the garden. The latter is very prim in its design, with neat rectangular beds, and an ornamental pond containing fish and with lotus lilies growing in it.

By now, however, it is almost time for the dinner-party to begin. Nesamon, dressed in spotless linen, is waiting in the central room for his guests to arrive, and is soon after joined by his wife who will assist him in presiding over the evening's entertainment. The attitude of the Egyptians towards women was of a reasonably advanced order. A man could take more than one legitimate wife,<sup>1</sup> and keep numerous concubines as well, but his legitimate consort was

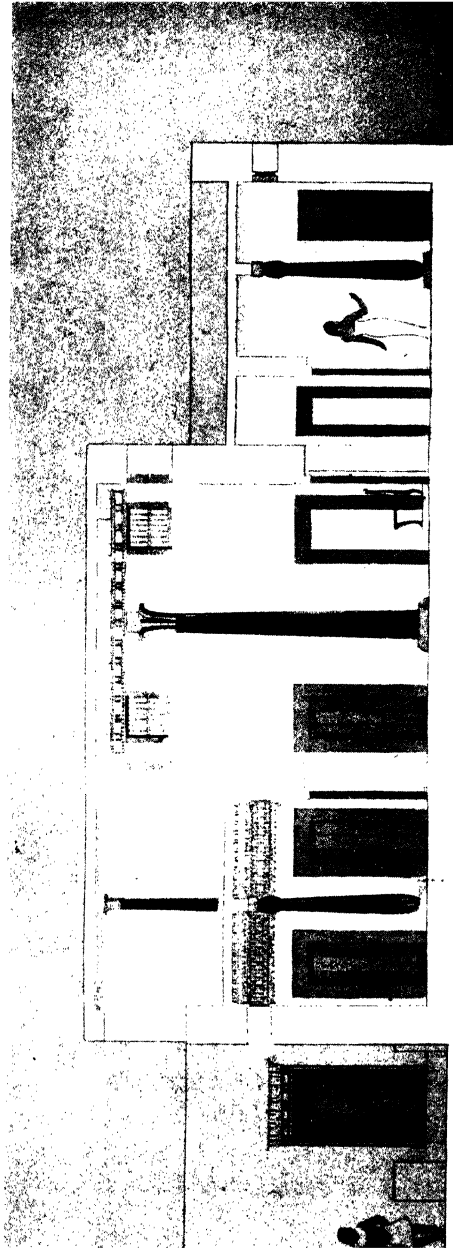
<sup>1</sup> This was not usual, however. Most Egyptians had only one wife, but occasionally we find instances of two.



*Fig. 1* [Egypt Exploration Society  
RESTORATION OF CENTRAL ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF  
THE VIZIER NEKHT, AT EL 'AMARNAH.



*Fig. 2* [Egypt Exploration Society  
PLAN OF THE HOUSE OF THE VIZIER NEKHT, AT EL  
'AMARNAH.



SECTION OF A PRIVATE HOUSE AT EL 'AMARNEH (RESTORED)

[*Egypt Exploration Society*]

entitled to play a worthy part in family life. In the tomb-paintings the wife is always shown accompanying her husband, whether he be feasting or hunting, and her name, coupled with such expressions as "his beloved wife, his darling" is boldly written on every wall. In life she was his honoured companion, and from early times such had been the case, for the sage, Ptah-hotep, in his book of wise precepts gives the following advice:

"If thou art a man of note, found for thyself an household, and love thy wife at home, as it beseemeth. Fill her belly, clothe her back; unguent is the remedy for her limbs. Gladden her heart, so long as she liveth; she is a goodly field for her lord."<sup>1</sup>

Still more important, however, was the fact that in the family descent on the *mother's* side was strongly emphasized. This was most significant in the case of the royal family, for no Pharaoh could consider his claim to the throne fully legitimate unless he married the royal heiress. This ensured that the blood of the sun-god would flow in the veins of his heir, and the pure solar line would thus be carried on. Such a religious belief encouraged kings to marry their sisters, a practice which did not repel the Egyptians and was indeed frequent in all classes of society. A concubine, however, was always quite distinct from the legitimate wife, and, having no legal *status* of any kind, could be discharged at will. It is probable that they were often women servants employed in the house.

<sup>1</sup> Translation by A. Erman and A. M. Blackman in *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*.



The guests are now arriving, some in chariots and some on foot, and are welcomed by their host and hostess in the central room. The meal is served almost at once, but first each guest has water poured over his or her hands at the ablution-platform before taking the place allotted. The High Priest and Second Priest of Amon, being the most distinguished guests, are given chairs on either side of Nesamon and his wife upon the raised brick platform; other guests of high rank also have chairs in other parts of the room, but the remainder seat themselves on reed mats upon the floor.

As soon as everyone is seated a servant presents each person with a lotus bloom, and during the evening it is the custom to toy with the flower, sniff it, and hold it to the nose of one's neighbour for him or her to sniff as well.

The assembled company presents a gay sight (Plate XI). Both men and women are dressed in white linen delicately gauffered (Plate XII), and wear elaborately curled artificial wigs (Plate XIII, fig. 2), black in colour, over their own hair.<sup>1</sup> Around their necks are brilliant collars of glazed beads of different colours (Plate XIV, fig. 2.) and bangles are fastened to arms and legs. Some have their ears pierced to receive enormous circular studs of coloured faience, and the eyebrows of both sexes are made up with black pigment, while the finger- and toe-nails of the women are stained with henna.

<sup>1</sup> The hair of Egyptian men was generally cut short beneath the wigs, but women's hair not necessarily so. The wigs themselves were usually made of human hair.

This eye-pigment, the use of which corresponds to that of *kohl* at the present day in Egypt, was of two varieties, black and green, and was stored in little vases of alabaster, faïence and other materials. Some examples of these vases, preserved in the British Museum, are shown on Plate xv, complete with the little rods for applying the paint; most interesting are Nos. 27376 and 2573, the former of blue faïence bearing the name of Tutankhamon in black colour, the latter of white faïence with the names of Tutankhamon and his queen, Ankhsenamon. Both eyelids and eyebrows were coloured with the paint, and a thick line was added beneath the eyes in order to make them appear large and full. A wooden toilet-chest of an Egyptian lady may be seen on Plate xvi, it contains two alabaster unguent-vessels, a double *kohl*-vase, a comb, a pair of sandals and other things.

The food is placed near to the guests on low tables, and in all parts of the room wine-jars are fixed in stands and decorated with flowers. The dinner is a plentiful one, consisting of roast beef, chicken, duck, pigeon, vegetables, fruit and a large supply of different sorts of bread baked in a variety of shapes. Drinks consist of barley beer and wine, the latter being stored in wine-jars carefully marked with the name of the vineyard and the year in which the vintage was "put down" (Plate xvii, fig. 1).

The guests at this banquet are drinking from cups which the servants are careful to keep filled, but another and quite different method of imbibing wine

was sometimes employed by the Egyptians and was a fashion probably borrowed from Asia. This was to use a siphon, the most important parts of which are shown on Plate XVII, fig 2. It consisted of an angle-tube of metal, in this case lead, into the two branches of which hollow reeds were fixed, one running horizontally to the drinker's mouth, the other dipping down into the jar of wine where it ended in a lead filter. The person who drank in this manner was thus able to make himself comfortable in a chair, a precaution which appears to us very necessary when we reflect upon the results of the doubtful joke, sometimes played at the present day, of persuading somebody to drink a glass of port through a straw.

Meanwhile music is discoursed by an orchestra composed of a girl with a light harp (Plate v, fig. 1), a man playing a lute, and another playing a large harp which stands upon the ground. These are supplemented by two women, one beating a rectangular tambourine, the other playing a pipe (Plate iv, fig. 2), and by three other women squatting on the ground and clapping their hands in time with the music. Now and then the musicians break into a song celebrating the glories of Thebes and her god Amon-Rē', such as:

"How powerful is Amon-Rē', the divine lover, when he shines forth in Karnak his city, the lady of life!"

or

"How happy is the temple of Amon, even she that spendeth her days in festivity with the king of the gods within her. . . . She is like to a woman drunken, who sitteth outside the chamber, with loosened hair. . . ."¹

¹ Translation by Dr. A. H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhēt*, p. 63.

While the guests are eating a servant comes round with an alabaster bowl full of scented grease, and taking a quantity places it upon the head of each guest. As the grease warms and melts it runs down over the person's head and face, causing a feeling of great pleasure to the greased one. What the artificial wigs must have been like afterwards may well be left to the imagination.<sup>1</sup>

During all this time drink has been circulating freely, the women holding their own against the men. "Give me eighteen cups of wine," cries one lady. "Behold I wish to drink until I am drunk. My inside is like straw!" Already half the company is intoxicated, and regrettable incidents are beginning to occur. One of the ladies is sitting miserably on her mat, with her wig on one side of her head and her dress slipping from one shoulder. She is obviously feeling very ill, and an attendant rushes up with a bowl, but alas, it is too late.

The High Priest of Amon, who has dined very abstemiously, is beginning to look at the riotous scene with stern eyes, and Nesamon deems it fitting that the party should soon be brought to a close. He therefore beckons to one of his servants and instructs him to tell the attendants of those guests who are now incapable to come and fetch their masters and mistresses. As soon as these latter have been assisted to the door, the remaining visitors feel that it is only polite for them, too, to depart,

<sup>1</sup> In coloured representations the dresses of Egyptians are often shown covered with brownish stains resulting from this application of unguent (e.g. Plate xi).

and so they take their leave. At last they are all gone, and only the voice of one of the harpists is heard, chanting a song generally sung at funeral banquets but which clearly sets forth the Egyptian view of life:

“ . . . Bodies pass away and others remain since the time of them that were before.

The gods that were aforetime rest in their pyramids, and likewise the noble and glorified, buried in their pyramids.

They that build houses, their habitations are no more.

What hath been done with them?

I have heard the discourses of Imhotep and Hardedef,<sup>1</sup> with whose words men speak everywhere—what are their habitations now? Their walls are destroyed, their habitations are no more, as if they had never been.

None cometh from thence that he may tell us how they fare, that he may tell us what they need, that he may set our heart at rest, until we also go to the place whither they are gone.

Be glad, that thou mayst cause thine heart to forget that men will one day beatify<sup>2</sup> thee. Follow thy desire, so long as thou livest. Put myrrh on thine head, clothe thee in fine linen, and anoint thee with the genuine marvels of the things of the god.

Increase yet more the delights that thou hast, and let not thine heart grow faint. Follow thy desire, and do good to thyself. Do what thou requirest upon earth, and vex not thine heart,—until that day of lamentation cometh to thee. Yet He with the Quiet Heart<sup>3</sup> heareth not their lamentation, and cries deliver no man from the underworld.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Famous sages of old time.

<sup>2</sup> A ceremony at the funeral.

<sup>3</sup> Osiris, god of the dead.

<sup>4</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

## CHAPTER III

### THE GODS AND THEIR WORSHIP

WE have already heard something of the Egyptian gods and of Amon in particular, but let us, in this chapter, make their closer acquaintance and consider the form which their worship took.

There was no such thing as "an Egyptian religion." Every locality had its special god, and the history of religion in ancient Egypt is largely the story of how first this and then that god succeeded, owing to political events, in obtaining the leadership for a time. There were, however, two gods who remained the most important throughout history—the Sun-god, and Osiris (Plate XVIII, fig. 1) who was at once the Nile, the soil and vegetation. To the Egyptian the sun and the Nile naturally appeared as the most powerful of the natural forces which ruled his life, and to these gods his worship was principally directed. Originally the beliefs connected with the Sun-god and Osiris were quite distinct; the former was thought of as a king who reigned in the sky, while Osiris ruled a gloomy kingdom beneath the earth. The Sun-god received his followers, when they died, into his heavenly kingdom, but the worshippers of Osiris

descended into the underworld. As time went on, however, the two religions became fused together, and in the New Kingdom the Sun-god was believed to visit the domain of Osiris at night and shed his radiance upon it.

The home of the Sun-god was at Heliopolis, situated north-east of modern Cairo, and there he was worshipped as Rē' and as Atum. As Rē' he is represented as a hawk-headed man, wearing on his head a sun-disc encircled by an *uraeus*. As Atum he appears in human form, wearing the double crown of Egypt. According to legend Rē'-Atum was self-created, and had himself first brought the gods into existence by spitting the god Shu and the goddess Tefnut, personifications of air and moisture respectively, out of his mouth. This pair then produced as children the earth-god, Geb, and Nūt, goddess of the sky, and when these two were locked together in an embrace Shu tore them apart and raised Nūt aloft, leaving Geb prostrate below. Thus sky and earth were set in position. Nūt then brought forth her children by Geb, and these were Osiris, Isis, Set and Nephthys. These nine gods made up the "Great Ennead" of the city of Heliopolis.

In the dim ages of the past, before mortal man sat upon the throne, Egypt had been ruled by the gods, and the first divine king was naturally the Sun-god Rē'. His reign was glorious, but when he waxed old and "his bones were silver, his body gold and his hair real lapis lazuli," mankind began to

to plot against him. Rē' heard them and was consumed with wrath, so that he summoned a council of his gods to decide what should be done to mankind whom he had created. The decision was reached that the Eye of Rē' should go forth in its most dread form, that of Hathor, and slaughter the human race. So it was done, and after the goddess had dealt great destruction the Sun-god was appeased. He found, however, that Hathor was enjoying herself so much that she could not be persuaded to stop. A cunning plan had, therefore, to be devised in order to preserve the remnant of mankind. Seven thousand jars of an especially potent beer were brewed and coloured red so as to resemble human blood. This was then emptied out until the fields were flooded, and when Hathor came forth next morning to continue the slaughter she found her face reflected in the beer, and stooped and drank. "She drank of it, and it pleased her; she became drunken and did not recognise mankind."

Every day the Sun-god sailed in his boat across the sky from east to west, his crew consisting of the gods who attended upon him. When day dawned he was a young child, newly born, but as the hours passed he rapidly grew until, at midday, he was a man in the fullness of his strength. As the afternoon wore on he began to age, till at length, when sunset came, he was an old man bowed in feebleness. To behold the sun at its rising was the delight of every Egyptian, and his earnest desire



for the life after death. "Hail thou disc, lord of beams," runs the Fifteenth Chapter of the Book of the Dead:

"Who shinest forth in the horizon every day! Shine thou in the face of the Osiris N. . . .<sup>1</sup> May he adore thee in the early morning, may he appease thee in the evening. Let the soul of the Osiris N. . . . go up with thee to the sky, let him journey forth in the Mānzet<sup>2</sup>-boat, let him enter port in the Mesketet<sup>2</sup>-boat, let him mingle with the Imperishable Stars in the sky. . . . Homage unto thee, Horakhte, who art Khepri the self-created! How beautiful is thy shining forth in the horizon, when thou dost illumine the Two Lands with thy beams. All the gods rejoice when they behold thee as king of the sky. . . ."

It was thus hoped that after death the dead man or woman would be received into the Sun-boat, and sail about the sky in the glorious presence of Rē'.

The Sun-god, however, travelled across the heavens not only in the form of a hawk-headed man but also as a beetle, the sacred *scarabeus*. This insect has a habit of laying its egg in a pear-shaped lump of dung which it then buries. When the larva hatches out the young one feeds upon the dung. The beetle, however, also makes a ball of dung for its own food, which it is frequently seen to roll along the ground between its legs, and the Egyptians, knowing nothing of the pear-shaped lump, and thinking that it was from the food-ball that the young hatched out, at once saw in the *scarabeus* a symbol of the sun-god, rolling the sun-disc across

<sup>1</sup> The name of the deceased person is inserted here.

<sup>2</sup> The names of the two boats used by Rē'; the first was the morning boat, the second the boat of the evening and night.

the sky. As the sun was both the source of life and himself self-produced, and the young beetles were also apparently produced from nothing, the comparison was striking, and so we find the Sun-god often depicted in beetle form as "Khepri." Thousands of models of the sacred beetle in glazed stone or *faïence*, with designs or inscriptions engraved on the base, were made and used as seals or amulets, and to-day museums and private collections are full of them (see pages 172 ff.).

When evening comes, and the Sun-god descends behind the western hills, he enters the portal of the Underworld. Hitherto his boat has sailed along the Heavenly Nile; now the river runs into the bowels of the earth through twelve dark caverns which correspond with the twelve hours of night. In this region Osiris is supreme, ruling over the dead, and even the Sun-god is thought of as being dead too, for during this part of his voyage he is no longer called *Rē* but *Iuf-Rē*, which means "Corpse of *Rē*." Each division of the *Duat* or "Underworld" is protected by a gate guarded by fierce serpents which spit fire, and the souls of the departed who are sailing with the Sun-god rely on his power to protect them and take them safely through. Between the fifth and sixth divisions of the *Duat* the Judgment Hall of Osiris stands, and here the fate of souls is decided. As the boat of *Iuf-Rē* proceeds on its way, towed by demons of the Underworld, both the blessed dead and the tortured wicked are seen, and the righteous rejoice for a brief time in the light which the Sun-

god has brought to their world of darkness. The most terrible ordeal, however, which the sun-boat has to meet is a huge serpent called Aapep, who tries to swallow up the god and his following. But the magic of Iuf-Rē' is too strong and the monster is always vanquished, so that at last the Sun-god bursts forth in all his splendour above the eastern mountains and a new day has begun. The story of this voyage is often told in word and picture upon the walls of the great royal tombs in the "Valley of the Tombs of the Kings" at Thebes, and is known as the "Book of *Imy Duat*." There is also a similar account of the voyage told in the "Book of Gates," and the reader will find a fine example of this carved upon the beautiful alabaster coffin made for Seti I, the second Pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty (reigned about 1320-1301 B.C.), preserved in the Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The king of Egypt was the earthly representative of the Sun-god, his son and actual embodiment. The ancient falcon-god, Horus, a form of the Sun-god, was the patron deity of the royal line, and the king is often referred to as "the Horus." The king himself was actually one of the gods, but was only called "the good god" during life; he became a "great god" when he died. When the king was begotten it was believed that the Sun-god appeared to his mother in the likeness of her husband, and so the child conceived was wholly divine.

When, however, the throne of Egypt was secured by the princes of the southern town of Thebes, who

founded the Eleventh Dynasty, the god of that place was raised to prominence, and finally to equality with the Sun-god. This god was called Amon, and was first a wind-deity, but was later worshipped as a personification of the productive power of nature, a deity of sexual generation. He is usually represented (Plate I, fig. 2) as a bearded man wearing on his head two tall plumes, and holding a sceptre in his hand, or else in the form of a neighbouring god, Min, wearing the same plumes, but with right arm raised holding a whip, and sexual member erect.

In order to secure the supreme position for their god the Theban priests identified him with the old Sun-god, and henceforth he was known as Amon-Rē', the state god of Egypt during the New Kingdom from 1580 B.C. onwards, the divine father of the kings of the Eighteenth and succeeding dynasties. It was Amon-Rē', "King of the Gods," who assisted the princes of Thebes to expel the hated Hyksos, the Shepherd kings, from Egypt, and to found the Eighteenth Dynasty. It was Amon-Rē' who gave victory to Pharaoh his son in campaigns abroad, making Syria, Palestine and Nubia subject to his all-conquering armies. The Pharaoh Tuthmosis III, who won for Egypt her Asiatic empire, stands before Amon-Rē', and the god addresses him thus:

"Thou comest to me and exultest, when thou seest my beauty, my son, my protector, Menkheperre', living forever. I shine forth for love of thee. Mine heart is gladdened

by thy beauteous coming to my temple, and mine hands impart protection and life to thy limbs. . . .

I have come that I may cause thee to tread down the  
princes of Palestine;

I spread them out under thy feet throughout their  
countries.

I cause them to behold thy majesty as the Lord of  
Radiance,

Thou shinest in their faces as my similitude.

I have come that I may cause thee to tread down them  
that are in Asia;

Thou smitest the heads of the Asiatics of Retenu.

I cause them to behold thy majesty equipped with thy  
panoply,

When thou layest hold on the weapons of war in the  
chariot.

I have come that I may cause thee to tread down them  
that are in their. . . .;

The lands of Meten tremble for fear of thee,

I cause them to behold thy majesty as a crocodile,  
Lord of terror in the water, unapproachable.

I have come that I may cause thee to tread down them  
that are in the islands;

They that are in the midst of the great green sea are  
aware of thy battle-cry.

I cause them to behold thy majesty as the Champion,  
Who appeared gloriously upon the back of his victim."<sup>1</sup>

As each successive Pharaoh returned with spoil and tribute to fill his treasury he added building after building to the house of Amon at Thebes, until it became the greatest shrine of the ancient world. Nor was the prestige of Amon limited to Egypt; temples were built in his honour throughout

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

Palestine and Syria and far south in Nubia. At home his priesthood soon became the most powerful of political factors.

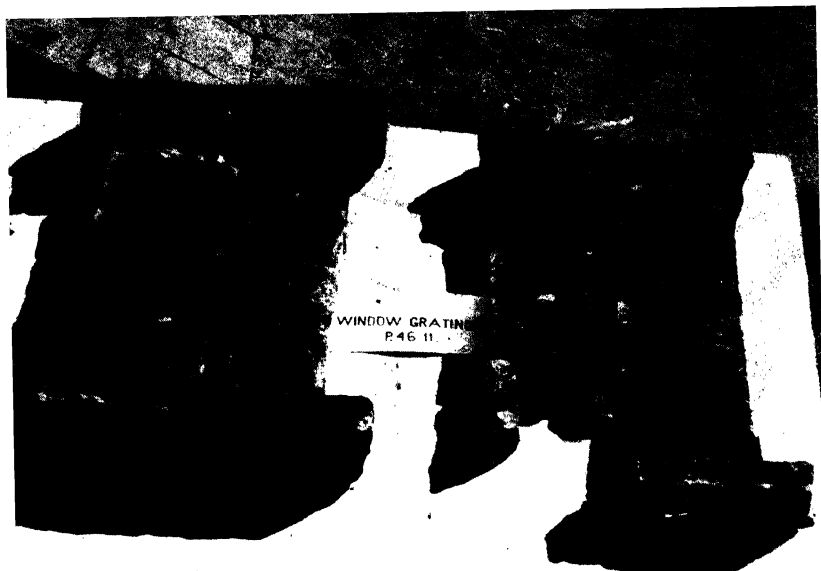
Very different from the domain of Amon-Rē' was that of Osiris at Abydos, the centre of that god's worship at this time. It was believed that Osiris himself (Plate XVIII, fig. 1) was buried in this district, and the wish of every Egyptian was to be buried there also, in the following of the "Lord of Eternity." This was not always possible, and so, as a substitute, it became the custom to erect a monument of some kind in the neighbourhood. Every year, too, a religious drama was performed at Abydos portraying the god's passion and death, and we are fortunate enough to have preserved to us an account of it, told by an official who actually took part in it himself.

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty the tombs of the ancient kings of the First Dynasty at Abydos were rediscovered, and, owing to a mistaken interpretation of the name of one of these kings, it was imagined that the real tomb of Osiris had been found, so that in after years the site of the tomb became covered by countless pots which had held the votive offerings of pilgrims.

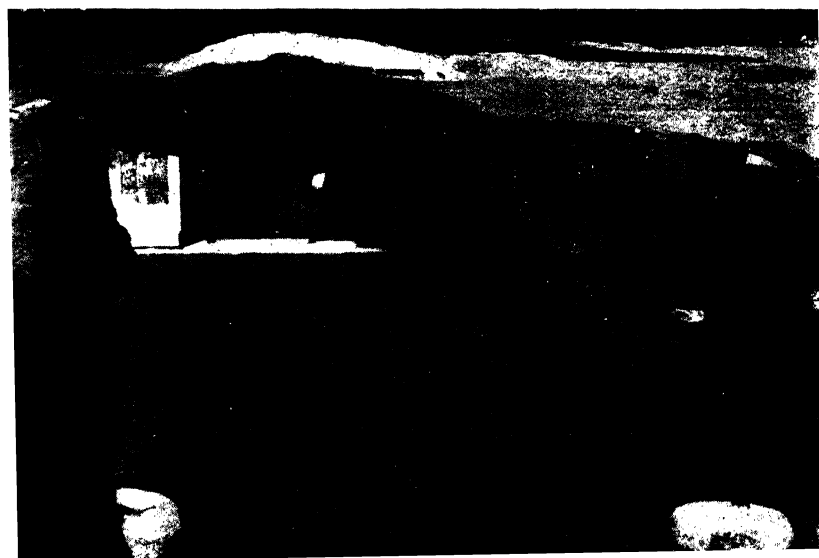
Abydos, then, was entirely connected in the Egyptian mind with death, and every man and woman was supposed to make a pilgrimage thither in order to worship Osiris and to beg from him a portion in his kingdom of the hereafter. Among the painted scenes adorning the walls of Egyptian

tombs this pilgrimage is often shown, and it was apparently believed that these pictures would serve as an equivalent if the real journey had not been performed during life.

Another very important god was Ptah, who was worshipped at Memphis. This city, known in ancient days as "White Wall," stood on the west bank of the Nile opposite the place now occupied by the modern town of Cairo, and at the beginning of the historical period had held the foremost place in Egypt. Tradition tells us that it was the site chosen by Menes, founder of the First Dynasty of kings, for his capital city. The god Ptah is always represented as a bearded man, clothed in tight-fitting garments from which his hands project holding a sceptre. He was regarded as an artificer-god, and therefore was identified by the Greeks in later times with Hephaistos. The High Priest of Ptah bore the title "Chief of the Master Workmen," and held a very important position among the various priesthoods of the country. The most illustrious holder of this office in all Egyptian history was Khâemuas, favourite son of Rameses II, the third king of the Nineteenth Dynasty and best known of all Egyptian Pharaohs, whom he did not live to succeed. Khâemuas was not only a priest, he was also a great magician, and stories of his wonderful doings were told even in Roman times. A fine statue of him, originally set up at Abydos, stands now in the British Museum, and is carved with inscriptions of a magical nature.



*Fig. 1* [Egypt Exploration Society]  
 STONE GRILLE-WINDOWS, FROM A PRIVATE HOUSE AT EL 'AMARNEH







The priests of Memphis, in direct contradiction to the theological teachings of Heliopolis, believed that Ptah was the creator of the world, and consequently in their account of the creation the Sun-god, Atum, played only a secondary part. A valuable religious text preserved in the British Museum tells us that Atum first appeared as a thought in the heart of Ptah, and as a word which found utterance upon his tongue. This at once reminds us of the doctrine of the Eternal Word, the Logos.

Another very important god, whom we have already met, was Thōth, worshipped at Hermopolis in Middle Egypt. Thōth is never represented in entirely human form, but as a man with the head of an ibis. He was the scribe of the gods, the inventor of writing, and the patron of learning generally. His High Priest bore the title "Greatest-of-the-Five."

The ram-headed god, Khnum, fashioned the bodies of men and women upon his potter's wheel, and was worshipped at various places in Egypt. He is best known to us, however, as a deity of the region around the First Cataract, the southern boundary of Egypt, where he was worshipped together with two goddesses, Satet and Anuket. At the town of Saïs, in the Delta, men worshipped a goddess called Neith, who is usually shown wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt and grasping a bow and arrows in her hand.

Two other very important goddesses were Nekhebet, a vulture, and Uto, the *uraeus* cobra. These

had been the patron deities of Upper and Lower Egypt respectively in prehistoric times, and remained such until the end of Egyptian history. Both vulture and *uraeus* were worn by Pharaoh on his brow as tokens of his authority over all Egypt; the *uraeus* was especially important, and, above all else, the symbol of kingship. When Pharaoh went into battle the *uraeus* upon his crown was said to spit fire at the enemy.

The goddess, however, who played the largest part after Isis, and was indeed often identified with her, was Hathor, whose chief shrine was at Denderah. Hathor was originally a cow-goddess, and as such is shown suckling young kings, but her chief part, in this form, was as goddess of the sky. The sky is generally represented in Egyptian pictures as the goddess Nūt, a woman who stoops over the earth with her head towards the west and her body covered with stars. The Sun-god is thus born of her in the morning, and travels along her body in his boat until he enters her mouth in the evening and the process begins again. Often, however, the sky is shown as a great cow, the goddess Meht-urt or the goddess Hathor, and the Sun-god travels along her body in the same way. Hathor was also worshipped as a goddess of love and physical enjoyment, and again, in strong contrast, as the patroness of the Theban Necropolis. A musical instrument, known as the *sistrum* (Plate v, fig 2), a kind of rattle, was regarded as especially sacred to her, and was used by priestesses in temple-

services throughout Egypt. In her human form Hathor is represented as a woman, wearing upon her head a pair of cow's horns with the sun-disc between them (Plate XVIII, fig 2).

Lastly, to come back to Thebes, the god Amon-Rē' was associated with two other deities, his consort Mūt, originally a vulture-goddess but now generally portrayed in human form, and his son Khonsu. The latter is always dressed as a young prince, wearing the side-lock of youth upon his head. Amon-Rē', Mūt and Khonsu thus together form a "triad," and such was the case in many Egyptian towns. Political events brought certain gods into connection with each other, and so a "triad" would be formed of father, mother and son, the original god of the town being the father. Ptah of Memphis was associated in this way with the lioness-headed goddess, Sekhmet, as his consort, and with Nefertem, a god who has a lotus upon his head, as his son. Horus of Edfu was married to Hathor of Denderah, and so on.

The feature of the Egyptian religion, however, which probably strikes the modern enquirer more than any other is the number of animal and semi-animal gods which were worshipped. To quote the words of Milton in *Paradise Lost*:

" After these appear'd  
A crew who under Names of old Renown,  
*Osiris, Isis, Orus* and their Train  
With monstrous shapes and sorceries abus'd  
Fanatic *Egypt* and her Priests, to seek  
Th'ir wand'ring Gods disguis'd in brutish forms  
Rather than human."

The majority of Egyptian gods and goddesses had associated with their worship some creature in which they were believed to manifest themselves to human beings; often enough they were represented in human form with the head of the creature in question. Naturally it followed that, in a district where some animal in particular was regarded as sacred to the local god, the whole species was protected, heavy punishment being inflicted upon all who killed or injured it. The reader has already met a number of animal gods, and we will now go on to describe some more. In the fertile district called to-day Fayum the god Sebek was worshipped in the form of a crocodile; in the region of Assiut a wolf-god called Upuaut, "Opener of Roads"; at Thebes a ram was sacred to Amon; at Bubastis the cat-goddess Ubastet was revered (Plate XIX, fig. 2), while nearly everywhere the hawk was sacred to Horus, the Sun-god. When these creatures died, whether they belonged to a temple or had been kept as pets by private persons, they were carefully mummified and buried in special cemeteries set aside for them. The cases of museums to-day contain animal mummies of all kinds, cats, hawks, snakes, ibises, fish, etc. (Plate XIX, fig. 1); most of these, however, belong to the later period of Egyptian history, for the cult of sacred animals, although descended from the earliest times, only assumed fanatic proportions during the decadence of Egyptian civilisation.

The most famous of all sacred animals were three

bulls: at Heliopolis the Mnevis bull, at Memphis the Apis bull, and at Hermonthis, near Thebes, the bull called Bacchis. Of these the best known to us is the Apis, sacred to the god Ptah of Memphis, and regarded as the incarnation of Osiris. When an Apis was chosen it was recognised by a triangular white blaze on its forehead and certain other marks, and was conveyed in a barge to Memphis amid great rejoicing. There it was kept in a special sanctuary and consulted for oracles, and on feast days it was led in procession through the city. When Apis died he was magnificently embalmed and buried in the tomb of the sacred bulls, and another Apis was chosen. The visitor to Egypt can to-day walk through the gloomy vaults of the Serapeum at Sakkarah and see the huge monolithic coffins in which the "living soul of Osiris" was laid to rest.

At Heliopolis the Mnevis bull was regarded as an incarnation of Rē', the Sun-god, as was also the Bacchis bull at Hermonthis. During the last four years the burial vaults of Bacchis have been excavated by the Egypt Exploration Society, and a great deal learnt about his worship. The most interesting things found were a series of stone tablets bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions which tell how each "living soul of Rē'" was enthroned, his age at death, and other details.

Let us now return to the night of Nesamon's dinner-party and accompany Bakenkhonsu, the High Priest of Amon, as he returns to the temple

at Karnak. Muffling himself in a cloak and accompanied by the Second Priest he walks into the cold night air, and ascends the chariot which is waiting for him. Their homeward journey lies along the processional road connecting the temples of Luxor and Karnak, flanked on either side by a row of stone sphinxes with rams' heads. After passing the temple of Khonsu they approach the pylon-towers of the great temple of Amon-Rē', but do not seek to enter through the main door as there are smaller doors elsewhere reserved for the use of priests.

The principal features of an Egyptian temple<sup>1</sup> from the Eighteenth Dynasty onwards may be described as follows. The main entrance (Plate xx) was approached up an avenue of sphinxes—in the case of Karnak this avenue led directly to the quay, whence religious processions on the river set out. The frontage of the temple consisted of two immense towers, called by us "pylons," built with a decided batter, and decorated with tall wooden flagstaves fastened in slots let into their outer face. From the top of these staves fluttered brightly-coloured pennons. The actual doors, of heavy wood, were set between the pylons, and gave access to a large court surrounded by a colonnaded portico. From this court the visitor passed to the columned hall, called by modern writers the "hypostyle hall," and from this to the actual sanctuary of the god, a rectangular room.

<sup>1</sup> For a fully detailed account of the temples in Egypt and the Sudan, see *Egyptian Temples* by Margaret A. Murray.

Around the sanctuary were grouped numerous other chambers, some being chapels devoted to gods and goddesses associated with the principal deity of the temple, others being used as vestries and store-rooms. The faces of the pylons were sculptured with huge figures of the king smiting down enemies with a mace or shooting them from his chariot. The interior walls of the court and halls were covered with reliefs showing religious processions, and the king receiving gifts from the gods or dedicating to them prisoners and spoil, while the columns, with capitals shaped to represent sheafs of lotus buds, or else imitating the open flower of the papyrus, were likewise carved with figures of gods and kings. All the scenes had explanatory hieroglyphic inscriptions. Brilliant colour was applied to the stone throughout, and indeed was needed, for, with the exception of the open court, the interior of the temple was but dimly lighted through windows placed high up.

Such, briefly, was the appearance of a typical Egyptian temple in its simplest form, but great elaborations were often included within the scheme. Thus in the temple of Amon at Karnak, the greatest of Egyptian temples, two small temples of Amon, Mût and Khonsu are included in the outer court, and, besides the colossal hall built by Seti I, five pylons and a number of other buildings lie between the court and the sanctuary, the accumulated additions of Pharaoh after Pharaoh.

Having entered the temple, Bakenkhonsu dis-



misses his colleague and makes his way up a staircase to the flat roof. He wishes to inspect the priests who are observing the stars, and to see that they are at their posts. Since it was very important to observe the stars in order to regulate the Egyptian calendar, especially with a view to the celebration of annual feasts at proper times, this became a constant duty of the priesthood. The man whose task it was sat upon the temple roof, holding up before his eye a long wooden instrument notched at the end, and noted the times at which certain stars, visible to him through this notch, crossed the vertical cord of a plumb-line held by an assistant priest who was seated some distance away. In this manner the hours were determined and charts compiled. After questioning the priests about their results and giving some advice Bakenkhonsu descends from the roof and retires to bed.

Early next morning, when the first light of dawn appears over the eastern mountains, the High Priest is awakened in order to celebrate the daily liturgy. The services in most of the temples of Egypt at this time are of the same form, being based upon the service celebrated every day in the temple of Rē' at Heliopolis. The main intention of this service is to perform the god's toilet and then to present him with a meal.

The sanctuary of the temple, mentioned above, consists of a rectangular chamber in which the god's shrine stands. Within the shrine stands the cult-image of the god, made of wood covered with





SEATED STATUES OF A NOBLE, OR HIGH OFFICIAL, AND HIS WIFE  
XVIII<sup>TH</sup> DYNASTY [*British Museum* No 36]

gold and inlaid with semi-precious stones, a beautiful work of art. The doors of the shrine are bolted, and also secured by a clay seal which is broken each time the service is performed. Thus Bakenkhonsu enters the sanctuary, and, after preliminary burning of incense, breaks the seal, opens the doors, and beholds the god. As each ritual act is performed the High Priest recites the appropriate prayers, fumigating the statue with incense, sprinkling it with water, dressing it in coloured cloths, presenting it with its crown and insignia, and finally painting its eyes with cosmetics. When all this has been accomplished food and drink are set before the shrine, and the god begins his repast. The earthly, visible food, however, is not consumed by the god, but only its spiritual, unearthly nature. The same belief applies to the offerings made to the dead, who eat only the spiritual nature. In both cases the material food, untouched by the god or dead person, is regarded as the perquisite of the priests.

On great festal occasions, when the god left his temple and was carried abroad in procession (Plate xx), he journeyed in a model boat made of wood overlaid with gold. The cult-image was placed in a cabin amidships, and the whole boat-shrine was borne on the shoulders of priests. The annual festival of Opet was the most important of such occasions, for then the god paid a special visit to the temple of Luxor, where his harem was supposed to dwell (the temple of Luxor was called "House of Amon

in the Southern Harem"). At this festival Pharaoh<sup>1</sup> himself officiated as High Priest, and the boat-shrines of Amon, Mût and Khonsu were conveyed up the river to Luxor on splendid barges, accompanied by enthusiastic crowds on the river banks.

The priesthood of a temple was divided into four divisions each of which served for one month at a time, and their duties included the celebration of services and care of the temple. There were two principal grades of priest, that of *uā'b*, which means "pure," and that of *hem-neter*, "god's servant," the *uā'b* being the lower grade. Besides the priests a number of priestesses were attached to some Egyptian temples. In the case of Amon the queen herself was regarded as High Priestess and bears the title "god's wife," while the ordinary priestesses were the concubines of the god, the High Priest's wife being in charge of them. The duty of Egyptian priestesses was to make music at the services, especially with the *sistrum* mentioned above (page 66).

So far we have considered mainly the religion of Pharaoh—that is to say, the state religion—and the religious practices of the temples. But the reader may ask what was the religious experience of the masses, the common people who were never admitted to a temple except on some important feast day, and then only as far as the forecourt. The most that they would ever see of the temple religion

<sup>1</sup> It should be made clear that in theory Pharaoh was the officiant at every temple service throughout the whole land. Actually, of course, his place was taken by the High Priests, except on special occasions.

would be the sacred boat of the god when it was carried abroad, or they might hear the chanting of the priests far off in the dim interior of the building. It was more natural for the humble person to worship some more popular deity, such as the friendly dwarf-god Bes, or the queer-looking but benevolent goddess Taurt. In many places the gods who played the greatest part in the poor man's religion were doubtless the spirits inhabiting certain trees or rocks, a good example being "Peak of the West." This mountain-spur rises opposite Luxor in the hill of Sheikh 'Abd-el-Gurneh, and was identified by the inhabitants of ancient Thebes with Mert-segert, the serpent-goddess of the Necropolis, and sometimes with Isis. Certain Necropolis workers, who had offended "Peak of the West" in some way and were being punished by her, have left us tablets inscribed with prayers to the goddess. One says:

"Mark, I will say to great and little  
That are among the workmen:  
Be ye ware of the Peak!  
For that a lion is within the Peak.  
She smites with the smiting of a savage lion:  
She pursues him that transgresses against her."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes the gods of the common people were sacred animals of some kind, like "the beautiful dove which endures, endures evermore," or "the beautiful cat which endures, endures."

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Battiscombe Gunn in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. III, p. 86.

The great gods, however, were by no means left out of the popular religion, although the systems of their cults followed in the temples meant but little to the masses. To them the gods existed in a closer personal relation. They thought of Amon-Rē' as "the vizier of the poor. He taketh not unrighteous reward, and he speaketh not to him that bringeth testimony, and looketh not on him that maketh promises"<sup>1</sup>—that is to say, he is above the corruption of the Egyptian courts, and will give justice to his suppliants. A tablet set up by a painter employed in the Theban Necropolis, in thanksgiving to Amon for healing his son, runs as follows:

" . . . Be ye ware of him! Tell it to son and daughter, to great and small. Declare it to generations and generations that yet exist not. Declare it to the fishes in the water, to the fowls in the heaven. Tell it to him that knoweth it and him that knoweth it not: Be ye ware of him!

Thou, Amon, art the lord of him that is silent, one who cometh at the voice of the poor. . . . Thou givest breath to him that is wretched, and thou deliverest me that am in bondage. . . .

Though the servant is disposed to commit sin, yet is the Lord disposed to be merciful. The Lord of Thebes passeth not a whole day wroth. His wrath is finished in a moment, and nought is left."<sup>2</sup>

How different is this from the conventional compositions which form the source of most of our knowledge of the Egyptian religion! In them the gods are approached with no sense of humility beyond the consciousness of weakness in face of

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

their power, and certainly with no acknowledgment of sin. The gods were regarded as superior beings from whom much might be expected if you knew how to set about it. If certain rituals were performed and powerful spells recited they could not resist the pressure put upon them, and the desired result was obtained. The attitude taken up by the suppliant was always one of complete blamelessness, a vast self-satisfaction which claimed that he was only asking for what he deserved. This attitude is, of course, most apparent in funerary compositions, where every effort is made to convince the gods that the deceased's life on earth was one of unparalleled virtue. In those few documents, however, which the religion of the poor has left to us we are shown the glimpse of a more genuine faith, the realisation of human sin and frailty coupled with firm confidence in divine mercy, the acknowledgment of a personal relationship with the gods far closer than that shown by the official religion of the temples.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE EXCELLENT SCRIBES

IN the early morning Any, aged ten, was reluctantly making his way to school along a dusty road. Every morning for several years he had received instruction in the school attached to the great funerary temple of Rameses II (now called the Ramesseum) on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes, and five or six more years lay in front before he would be able to obtain the Civil Service post which his parents coveted for him. As he contemplated the future a great weariness filled the heart of Any, coupled with unedifying reflections on the behaviour of parents and schoolmasters in general.

His father would have been pained if he had known his son's attitude, for Sebekhotep, chief scribe of one of the Theban granaries, had very definite ideas on the education of small boys. Only the day before he had taken Any aside and given him a great deal of advice, which he hoped the boy would remember during the new school-term that was about to begin. Nothing, he told him, could make up for a knowledge of reading and writing, and any profession which did not require this knowledge was degrading and unpleasant. On

this subject, a favourite one with Sebekhotep, the boring old man waxed eloquent:

"I have seen the smith at his task at the mouth of his furnace," he said; "his fingers were all hard and wrinkled like the skin of a crocodile, and he stank more than the offal of fishes. Every artisan who wields a chisel, he is wearier than the man who digs; his field is the wood and his hoe is the metal. At night time, when he is set free, he works beyond what his arms can do, by lamplight." And so on through all the various callings which he could think of. No! Any must learn to be a scribe and give all his attention to that end.

"Would that I might make thee love books more than thy mother!" exclaimed Sebekhotep in conclusion. "Would that I might bring their beauty before thy face!"<sup>1</sup>

Tiresome as this long-winded counsel seemed to the young boy, Sebekhotep was undoubtedly right in saying that the scribal profession was the most pleasant of all. The ranks of the government administration in all its departments were open to intelligent youths who could keep accounts or do secretarial work, and nearly every department had some sort of school attached to it, where young men could be instructed by higher officials with a view to obtaining posts later on.

The priesthood was, of course, the most learned of all professions, its members in the higher grades

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

being concerned with the study of ancient religious texts and the compilation of new ones, as well as the celebration of services. Schools were attached to all the larger priestly colleges, and from them boys graduated into secular administrative posts or, if they chose, into the priesthood itself. To be able to read and write at once raised a person above his fellow men and gave him a strong feeling of superiority, which the Ancient Egyptian was never tired of showing with snobbish insistence. Yet he was certainly right in maintaining that the scribe was a privileged person; for him there was none of that forced labour which rendered the lot of the peasant so hard, and his life was spent in directing others instead of slaving for some exacting superior.

While we have been discussing the weighty pronouncements of Sebekhotep, his son Any has been drawing nearer to his destination, and already several other schoolboys have caught sight of him and run to join their friend. The temple (Plate XXI, fig. 1) of King Rameses, beloved of Amon, stands between the vivid green fields and the foot of those mountains behind which, in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, the great Pharaoh once rested in his "house of eternity." Built for the everlasting service of his soul the Ramesseum is to-day one of the most impressive buildings in Egypt, with its huge columns sculptured to represent Rameses in the form of Osiris, and its colossal statue of the king lying broken in vast fragments. The temple is surrounded on three sides by brick buildings

which, in ancient times, were used for the priests' houses, an important royal library, store-houses, and the school. When Any arrived it was almost time for lessons to begin, and the school, which consisted of a room bare of any furniture save a chair for the master, was already filled with boys sitting cross-legged on the floor. Without more ado, therefore, Any took his place and began to get his writing materials ready. While he is doing this let us consider the nature and method of Egyptian writing in general.

As early as the beginning of the First Dynasty, about 3300 B.C., the Egyptians had perfected a system of writing which remained in use for over 3,500 years. This writing was the "hieroglyphic" writing which covers the walls of temples and tombs in Egypt, as well as thousands of objects preserved to-day in museums. It is often referred to as "picture-writing," and indeed every sign used is a picture of some creature or thing. But such a term, when applied to Egyptian hieroglyphics, is somewhat misleading, as it suggests that the Egyptians did not write down *words* but merely expressed their *ideas* by means of drawings, as did the North American Indians in their writing upon birch-bark. This is not the case, however; an Egyptian inscription records a spoken language of which the words can be *spelt out* by modern scholars, and the grammar studied in detail like that of Latin or Greek. It is impossible to give here a detailed account of the complicated hiero-

glyphic system; the reader will find that in the standard works<sup>1</sup> on the Egyptian language, but I will roughly describe the principles on which it worked.

Egyptian hieroglyphs, of which hundreds were in use, may be broadly divided into two classes—phonetic, that is representing *sounds*, and *ideographic*, representing ideas. The former class is by far the larger, and in this a few signs are alphabetic, having the value of single letters, while the rest represent syllables. With these sound-signs the idea-signs are ingeniously combined so as to make the meaning of a word clear. The reader will find all this easier to comprehend if he studies the passage from the Westcar Papyrus reproduced on Plate XXII. The Egyptian text has been split up so that each word stands separately (in actual writing no space was left between one word and the next), and underneath are given the sound-values in English letters and a word-for-word translation. It should first be realised, however, that in writing down a word the Egyptians only wrote the *consonants* and omitted the vowels. Consequently we shall never know how the ancient Egyptian language was pronounced, for we do not know what the vowels were, although we are sometimes able to tell by comparison with Coptic.<sup>2</sup> The sound-values of the words on Plate

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the Egyptian language and hieroglyphic system see *Egyptian Grammar*, by Alan H. Gardiner.

<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian language as written in the Coptic script from about the third century A.D. onwards. Hieroglyphics had been abandoned by that time and Greek letters, *including* the vowels, were employed, together with the addition of certain special signs derived from the old hieroglyphs.

xxii are there given in the conventional system of transliteration used by scholars to-day.

The first word *iw* is part of the verb to be; the flowering reed = *i* and the chick = *w*; the horned viper = *f*, *he*, and the whole combination stands for "he is." Next, the owl has the sound-value *m*, and this is here a word meaning "as" which, however, would not be translated in English. The following word *nd's* strictly means "little one," but also comes to mean "commoner," "townsman." The first sign is a picture of a ripple of water and = *n*; the snake = *d* (i.e. *dj*), the folded cloth = *s*. Then we come to two final signs, a crested lark and a man seated on the ground. The bird is what is called a "determinative," and is written at the end of all words having a meaning of small, or evil—i.e. it "determines" the general significance of the preceding word. The man is also a determinative, and simply explains that the preceding word represents a man. Another example of a determinative is the seated man with his hand to his mouth, who appears at the end of the verbs *wnm*, "to eat," and *swri*, "to drink," in lines 2 and 4 respectively. He tells us that the preceding words signify actions connected with the mouth. And so on. A running translation of the whole passage is as follows: "He is a townsman one hundred and ten years old. He eats five hundred loaves, and the haunch of an ox in the way of meat, and drinks a hundred jugs of beer unto this day."

The hieroglyphic script was employed for all

religious documents, such as copies of the Book of the Dead or other sacred works, for the inscriptions with which the walls of temples and tombs were covered, and for monumental inscriptions of all kinds. For the purposes of everyday life, however, the elaborate signs required too much time and trouble, and so a more rapid script was developed. In this script, known to us as "Hieratic," all the hieroglyphic signs are still employed, but each one is much abbreviated, and many of the signs are joined up by ligatures (Plate XXIII). It is an approach to our "running hand." Hieratic was always written from right to left, whereas hieroglyphic could be written in either direction, or from top to bottom. It was this advantage that rendered hieroglyphic so suitable as a means of decoration. Inscriptions could be arranged and fitted into a given space with the greatest ease. Hieratic, on the other hand, was employed for all documents of a secular nature such as accounts, administrative business, literary compositions, etc. During the Twenty-first Dynasty it was used for religious literature for the first time, and this became a practice from then onwards. In order to study a hieratic text in comfort it is necessary for the student of to-day to transcribe it first into hieroglyphic. The first line of the page of Papyrus d'Orbiney reproduced on Plate XXIII is transcribed into hieroglyphic beneath. The reader will be able to note how each hieroglyph has been abbreviated in the hieratic.

The chief material on which the ancient Egyptians

wrote was papyrus, made from the papyrus-plant which in those days grew abundantly in the marshes of the Delta, but which to-day is no longer found in Egypt, although it still grows in the Sudan. This writing material was prepared in the following manner. The stem of the plant was first stripped of its outermost layer and then sliced into long strips. These were placed side by side upon a flat surface and other strips laid across them at right angles. The two layers were then fastened together by some adhesive and the whole pressed and dried. The sheet thus made could be gummed to another sheet and so on, until a roll of the required length was obtained. An entire book could therefore be copied out upon such a roll, and the reader simply rolled up what he had read and unrolled some more. Papyrus, however, was comparatively expensive, and it was therefore reserved for the more important uses. For everyday business purposes thin flakes of limestone were often employed, and these were especially to be found in the schools where it was not likely that papyrus would be allowed to any but the more advanced scholars. Wooden writing-tablets were also used by schoolboys and others (Plate xxv). These were covered with a thin layer of gesso which was polished, so that writing could be washed off when finished with and the tablet employed again.

The pen (Plate xxiv) used by the Egyptians was not strictly a pen at all. It consisted of a thin reed the end of which was bruised so as to form a brush,



and it is wonderful to see what they were able to accomplish with this instrument. Not only was the writing upon papyrus executed with it, and that is often worthy of admiration, with bold and well-made hieroglyphs or flowing hieratic characters, but the exquisite scenes which cover the walls of tombs were also outlined with this pen.

The ink used by Egyptian scribes was of two colours, black and red. The black, which was simply made of soot, was that chiefly used, red being kept for special passages, such as the title or opening words of a new chapter, or for names of gods and other important words.

The equipment of a scribe consisted of his palette, pens, and a little pot of water in which to mix his ink. The palette (Plate xxiv) was usually made of wood or ivory and consisted of a narrow rectangular board at one end of which were two hollows for holding the ink. These hollows were often made in the form of the *cartouche*, in its original circular form (Nos. 5512 and 5514). Lower down in the board was a long hollow into which the reed pens were thrust, and the remainder of the board was often ornamented with the owner's name cut in hieroglyphs, with perhaps the name of the reigning king as well and some appropriate text, such as a prayer to the god Thōth, the inventor and patron of writing. Our young friend Any had been lent the beautiful palette which had belonged to his grandfather Meryrē', as his father imagined that it would

prove an encouragement to him in his studies. This palette was inscribed with the two following prayers:

1. "An offering which the King gives to Thōth, lord of the divine words,<sup>1</sup> that he may grant the knowledge of writings which came forth from him,<sup>2</sup> and understanding of the divine words,<sup>1</sup> unto the *Ka* of the Hereditary Prince and Count, the official at the head of the King's nobles, the High Steward of the King, Meryrē'."

2. "An offering which the King gives to Amon-Rē', Lord of Karnak, the sole god, living upon Truth, that he may grant the sweet breeze that cometh forth from him, and great favour in the Palace, unto the *Ka* of the High Steward of the King, Meryrē'."

The education given at school consisted almost entirely of reading and writing, nor is it to be wondered at if the elaborate hieroglyphic system was only mastered after years of hard practice. Having learned this the pupil passed on to hieratic, just as a child to-day might pass from reading and writing printed words to a knowledge of the running hand. To cultivate a fine hieratic hand was the aim of the youthful scribe, and in order to do this he was made to copy out pages of text. In fact, a great part of the school training consisted of copying out various suitable books, and the master's corrections were written at the top of the page. In the case of one such papyrus copy-book which has come down to us we know that its owner had

<sup>1</sup> The expression "divine words" means "hieroglyphic writing."

<sup>2</sup> i.e. he invented writing.

to copy out three pages<sup>1</sup> a day, since he has dated his successive pieces of work.

Mathematics were also taught to a certain extent and consisted largely of computations of a practical nature. In a land such as Egypt, where the boundaries of agricultural property were yearly obliterated by the inundation, a knowledge of land measurement was essential, and besides this the officials in charge of the treasury and scribes connected in any way with the collection of taxes or the storing of grain required a sound training in arithmetic. Various Egyptian treatises on mathematics have survived to this day, the most famous being the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus in the British Museum.

The discipline of an ancient Egyptian school must have been painfully strict, judging by the references made to it in the improving compositions which the schoolboys had to copy out. "Write with thine hand, and read with thy mouth," says the master to his pupil. "Be not slack, and spend not a day in idleness, or woe betide thy limbs! Enter into the methods of thy teacher and hear his instructions." "Spend no day in idleness or thou wilt be beaten. The ear of the boy is on his back, and he hearkeneth when he is beaten."<sup>2</sup>

Stern as was this use of corporal punishment it seems that the school authorities could go even further in their zeal for rectifying the errors of the

<sup>1</sup> By "page" I mean a block of writing consisting of so many horizontal lines. When the writer neared the bottom edge of his roll he began the first line of another block or page, further to the left along the roll.

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*



Fig 2

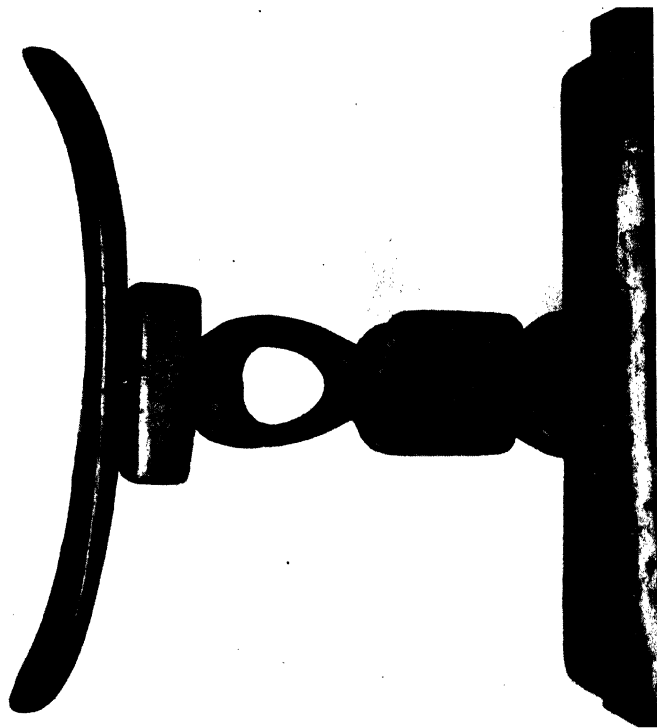


Fig 1

IVORY HEAD-REST, OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM. *British Museum* No. 30727.

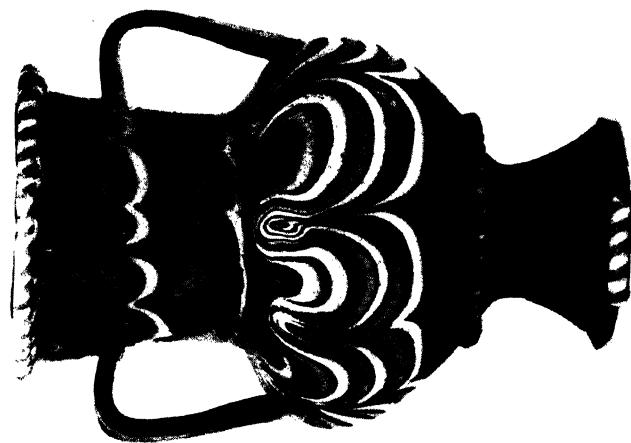


Fig. 1 [Egypt Exploration Society  
MULTI-COLOURED GLASS VASE, FROM EL 'AMARNEH  
[Brussels Museum]

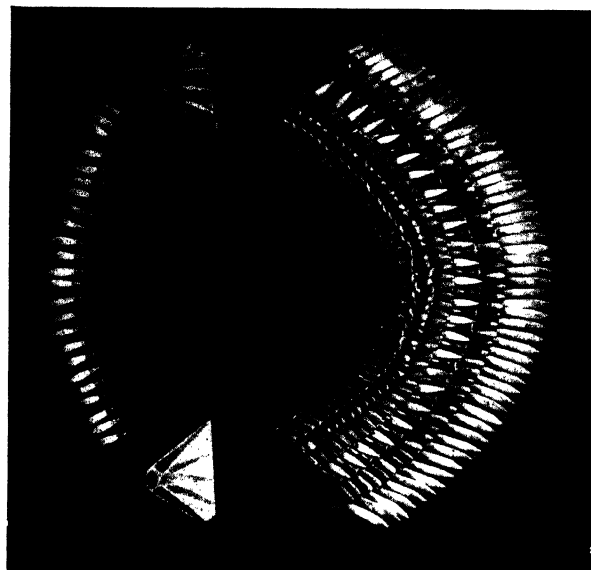


Fig. 2 [Egypt Exploration Society  
GLAZED FAÏENCE BEAD COLLAR, IMITATING A GARLAND OF  
FRUITS AND FLOWERS, FROM EL 'AMARNEH [Cairo Museum]

young. In another passage from the copy-books the master describes to his pupil the grave things which happened to *him* when *he* was young, and apparently equally irresponsible. "If thou lookest at me myself," he says, "when I was as young as thou, I passed my time with the handcuff on me, and this it was that bound my limbs, when it stayed on me for three months and I was imprisoned in the temple, while my father and my mother were on the land and my brethren also." Apparently the effects of such drastic treatment were very salutary, for the master goes on to say: "When it (the handcuff) left me and mine hand was free, then surpassed I what had been aforetime, and was the first of all my comrades, and surpassed them in books."<sup>1</sup>

The above quotations are a fair sample of the "improving" works copied out by schoolboys. They abound in exhortations to industry, eulogies of the scribal profession, insulting comparisons with all other callings, and stern admonitions against frivolity. "I am told," says the master, "thou forsakest writing, thou givest thyself up to pleasures; thou goest from street to street, where it smelleth of beer, to destruction."<sup>1</sup> In addition to material of this kind, however, the boys copied out model letters which dealt with business of various kinds. Some of these letters were adapted by the teacher from original examples, while others are of a fictitious nature. Their object was to instruct the pupil in

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

the composition of letters of all sorts, and to familiarise him with elaborate forms of expression. Long lists of words were also set before the boys; these include the names of heavenly bodies, the various ranks of the population, geographical names, names of buildings and their parts, and countless sorts of food and drink. An interesting example is the writing board, reproduced on Plate xxv, which gives a list of names of Keftians (people of Crete), and belongs to the Eighteenth Dynasty. We may assume that the boys had to learn how to write them correctly and then committed them to memory. In these occupations little Any passed the morning until the midday sun blazed down from the zenith. School was never held in the afternoon, and so, when their master had dismissed them, he and his friends rushed out of the building with whoops of joy, not very different from the demonstrations of our own children to-day. His efforts, moreover, had made him hungry, and he was glad to see his mother waiting outside with his lunch of bread and beer. After consuming this he was free to play to his heart's content.

The description of school books leads us on to consider Egyptian literature in general. What sort of books did the cultivated person have about him? They may be divided into two main classes, compilations of useful precepts and stories.

Let us consider the former class first.

The Egyptians were always extremely fond of expressing their ideas on personal conduct in the

form of precepts (somewhat like the Book of Proverbs in the Bible), and it was customary for the writer to put these into the mouth of some great man of old time who had been renowned for his wisdom. One of the most famous of these books of wisdom was *The Instruction of Ptah-hotep*, which professed to have been composed by a Vizier of that name who had served King Isesi of the Fifth Dynasty (about 2650 B.C.). The introduction of this work pictures Ptah-hotep as having grown old, and anxious that his son should receive the benefit of his accumulated wisdom. He then embarks upon a series of admonitions dealing with correct behaviour in various circumstances. He warns his son against being puffed up because of his knowledge, encourages him to follow truth in all things, discourses on the advantages of marriage, describes how a guest should behave at table and so on. A very similar book of *Instruction* was attributed to a Vizier of even earlier times, called Kagemni, and contains the following sound advice on behaviour at table:

"If thou sittest with many persons, hold the food in abhorrence, even if thou desirest it; it taketh only a brief moment to master oneself, and it is disgraceful to be greedy. . . . He is a miserable man that is greedy for his body."<sup>1</sup>

The efforts of the Egyptians at story-telling produced results which are far more interesting than the moral compositions just described. A number of their stories have been preserved to us upon papyri and limestone flakes, and the best in every

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*



way is undoubtedly the famous *Story of Sinuhe*. The action takes place in the earlier part of the Twelfth Dynasty, and the narrative opens with an impressive account of the death of Amenemhēt I, the founder of that house of kings. When the old king dies his son Senusert is returning from a campaign against the Libyans, and the news of his father's death is brought to him while on the march. Senusert at once sets off home with all speed, but apparently not before a plot has been hatched to set up a rival king. Some words of this plot are overheard by a noble of exalted rank, called Sinuhe, who is in attendance upon Senusert. Sinuhe is overcome with panic, fearing that he is going to be embroiled in the strife which seems imminent, and so resolves on instant flight. In sore straits he wanders from place to place, and finally makes his way northwards through Palestine, where he is befriended by Nenshi, a native prince. Sinuhe's luck now begins to turn, years pass and he grows rich and powerful as a local ruler, yet his thoughts are ever turned to Egypt and he longs to return. Eventually his wish is granted, and a decree is brought which summons him to the Court of Pharaoh. Sinuhe is overjoyed and makes his way back to Egypt as fast as he can, where he is given a splendid welcome by Senusert I and his court. Such is the simple plot of this ancient story, but the reader must examine it for himself<sup>1</sup> if he is to enjoy its

<sup>1</sup> e.g., in the fine translation by Erman and Blackman in their *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*.

masterly execution. The style, though abounding in literary artifice, is firm and grand, and able to impress us across the centuries. There are moving passages, as when the exiled noble voices his longing for Egypt:

“O God, whosoever thou art, that didst ordain this flight, be merciful and bring me again to the Residence. Peradventure thou wilt suffer me to see the place wherein mine heart dwelleth. What is a greater matter than that my corpse should be buried in the land wherein I was born?”<sup>1</sup>

or again when the royal decree announces the recall of Sinuhe in stately language, urging him to consider the day of his death and return to Egypt, where the proper burial rites will be performed for him. The narrative is full of realistic touches, as when the queen of Egypt and the royal children shriek aloud on beholding the appearance of Sinuhe, almost refusing to believe that this unkempt Bedouin is really the courtier of former days.

It will be clear at once that the story just described is of a semi-historical nature, purporting to recount events which actually occurred in the reign of Senusert I. Whether or no this tale has an historical basis it is probably true to say that most of the “stories” which were popular in ancient Egypt were regarded by the Egyptians as historical narratives. Apart from royal annals they were the nearest approach to written history which they had, hence we are not surprised to find that the chief

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

actors in the stories are often kings of old time or else gods. Thus the *Story of King Khufu and the Magicians* tells how the Fifth Dynasty began. Khufu, the first king of the Fourth Dynasty and the builder of the Great Pyramid, is pictured as sitting in his palace, listening to a series of incredible stories related to him by his children. Last of all Prince Hardedef stands up and actually offers to produce a magician who can work certain marvels. When this accomplished person has been brought to the court and has demonstrated his remarkable powers he is closely questioned by Pharaoh, to whom he foretells that his house will not continue long upon the throne of Egypt, but will pass in succession to each of the three children who are shortly to be born of a woman called Reddedet, the wife of a priest of Rē'. The birth of these triplets is then described, the goddesses Isis, Nephthys, Meskhent and Heket acting as midwives and prophesying the future greatness of the infants. The connection of this tale with history is easily realised when we remember that the rise of the Fifth Dynasty was undoubtedly due to the priests of Rē' at Heliopolis, and that the greatest stress was laid on sun-worship throughout that dynasty.

Another famous tale of the older period is that of the *Shipwrecked Sailor*, composed during the Middle Kingdom. It tells how a sailor was wrecked in the Mediterranean Sea, the ship going down with all hands, he alone being saved and washed ashore on a magic island. There he met a gigantic serpent

“thirty cubits long, and his beard—it was longer than two cubits; his body was overlaid with gold, his eyebrows were of real lapis lazuli.”<sup>1</sup> This amazing creature, however, proved to be of a most benevolent disposition, and, after listening to the sailor’s adventures, recounted a strange tale of its own. Eventually a ship called at the island and rescued the sailor, who departed for Egypt laden with presents from the serpent. The strong resemblance between this story and the famous tale of “Sindbad the Sailor” in the *Arabian Nights* will be recognised at once, the Egyptian narrative appearing to be the prototype of all such tales of adventure in fairy regions.

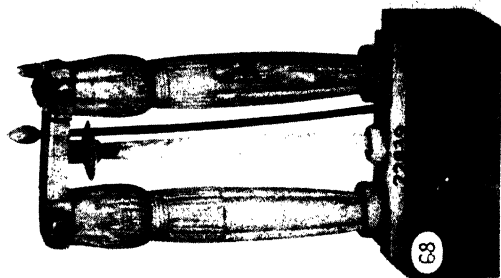
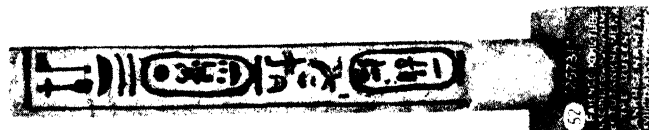
During the New Kingdom stories were composed as in earlier times, but the Egyptian language had by then undergone great changes. New Egyptian, as it is called by Egyptologists, does not seem to us such a dignified instrument of speech as the classic Middle Egyptian, but there are several entertaining narratives preserved to us through this medium. The best known is probably the tale of the *Two Brothers* (Plate XXIII).

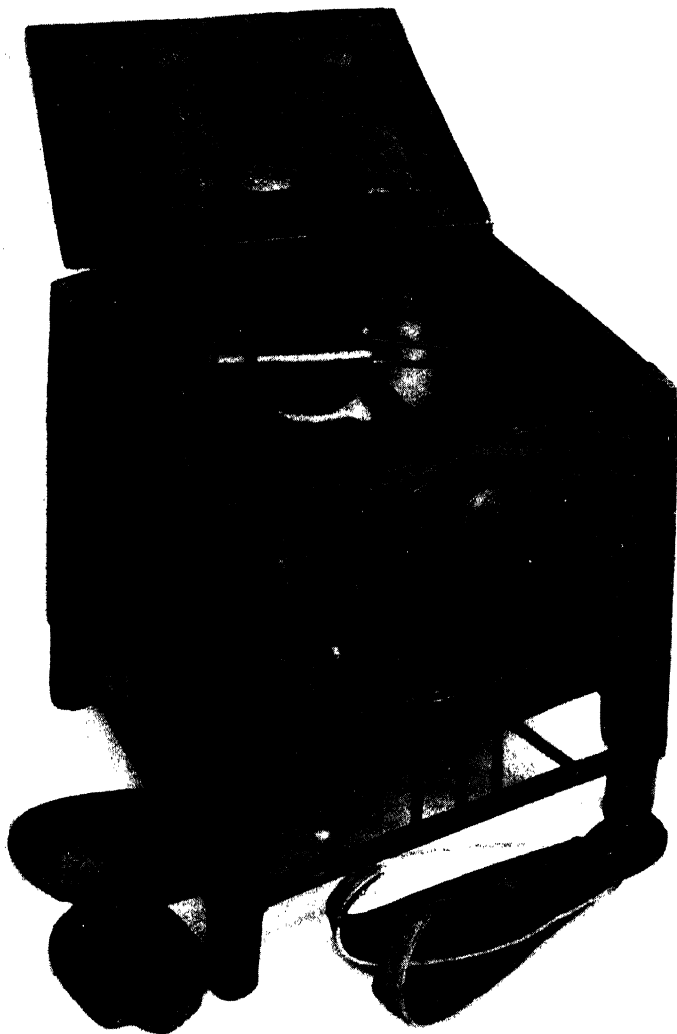
The tale tells how two brothers, Anpu and Bata, —the elder of whom, Anpu, was married—lived together in amity and peace, pursuing their occupations as farmers. One day, however, the younger brother returned home from the field to fetch some seed which was required, and found his brother’s wife having her hair dressed. The woman attempted

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

to seduce Bata, and, when the youth indignantly refused and departed, made up her mind to poison Anpu's mind against him. This she did when her husband came home in the evening, and pretended that Bata had assaulted her. Filled with rage against his innocent brother Anpu determined to slay him, but Bata was happily warned by two of the cows which he was driving into the byre, and ran away immediately with Anpu in hot pursuit. Eventually the brothers confronted each other across a stream which Rē'-Horakhte had caused to appear between them, and Bata was able to convince Anpu of the wife's faithlessness and his own innocence. Anpu then returned home to slay his wife and cast her to the dogs.

After this Bata went away to the Valley of the Cedar, where he lived alone for some time, hunting the game of the desert. Fearing that he would be lonely the Nine Gods caused Khnum to fashion him a wife of exceeding beauty, who nevertheless proved to be Bata's ruin. One day while walking by the sea the latter secured a lock of her hair and carried it to Egypt, to the place where the linen of Pharaoh was washed, with the result that its fragrance permeated the royal clothes. When Pharaoh complained of this, supposing that they had not been properly washed, a search was made at the brink of the river where the washing was done, and the lock was discovered. This was at once brought to Pharaoh, who determined to find its owner.





TOILET-CHEST OF AN EGYPTIAN LADY, CONTAINING UNGUENT VESSELS,  
DOUBLE *Kohl*-TUBE, COMB, PAIR OF SANDALS, ETC. [*British Museum*  
No. 24708]

An expedition was despatched to the Valley of the Cedar which Bata destroyed, but a second proved to be more successful and the woman was brought to Egypt. When Pharaoh had espoused her and raised her to the position of princess she besought him to ensure her husband's death by sending to the Valley of the Cedar, and causing to be cut down the cedar on the flower of which Bata had placed his heart. This was done, and Bata straightway died.

The faithless wife had not seen the last of him, however, for having been revived by Anpu, who restored to him his heart, he appeared at court in the guise of a sacred bull and revealed his identity to the princess. At once she had him slaughtered, but two drops of blood fell upon the ground before the palace gateway and from these two great persea trees sprang up. Sitting under one of these trees some days later, the princess heard Bata speaking to her, and realised that he was still in existence. The terrified woman then persuaded Pharaoh to have the trees felled and made into furniture, but it was all to no purpose. A chip of the wood entered her mouth and she bore a son, who turned out to be none other than Bata himself! On the death of Pharaoh he ascended the throne, meted out punishment to the wicked wife and appointed his elder brother to be Crown Prince.

To a student of Egyptology who reads the tale just narrated it soon becomes clear that the two brothers are not mortal men, and that their mar-



vellous experiences are not entirely the invention of an ingenious novelist. The reader will recall my statement that the "stories" of the ancient Egyptians were really equivalent to popular historical works, and the *Tale of the Two Brothers* is yet another case in point. Anpu, the elder brother, is none other than the god Anubis, while Bata is known as a god who was worshipped side by side with him in the Upper Egyptian town of Saka. Notwithstanding this, the story of Bata undoubtedly reproduces part of the Osiris legend in a popular form, notably in the account of his death and revivification by Anpu.

Traditions concerning the various gods and their histories were of course preserved in the vast body of religious literature compiled by the priests. Almost every "utterance" of the ancient Pyramid Texts and chapter of the later Book of the Dead is packed with mythological allusion, often incomprehensible to readers of our own age. But it must not be supposed for a minute that this official religious literature was ever read by the mass of the population. For one thing, comparatively few could read and write, and those who could are not likely to have often been allowed the privilege of studying temple books, which were reserved for the priests alone. The funerary texts, also, which cover the walls of tombs and are inscribed on papyri and funerary objects, were probably copied out by the undertakers' scribes and barely comprehended by the persons for whom they were prepared. As in other

parts of the world, the traditions of religion were preserved in popular stories handed down from mouth to mouth, in which the most interesting events in a god's life were narrated. Some of these tales, like that concerning the two brothers, were eventually written down, and we to-day are often very grateful for the illumination which they afford.

It may be asked if the compilers of such stories at times turn the laugh against their divine heroes, even as the Greek poets do not hesitate to enlarge upon the failings of the Olympians, their disloyalties, their subterfuges, and their philanderings. The answer is that the same freedom may be sometimes observed, the most striking example being a story recently discovered upon a papyrus of the Twentieth Dynasty and published by Dr. Alan Gardiner.<sup>1</sup> This remarkable document is a revelation of the Egyptian mind and its conception of the gods, purporting to describe an episode in the great lawsuit which the evil god Set brought against Horus after the death of the latter's father, Osiris. Set claimed the kingdom of Egypt, which rightfully belonged to Horus, and in order to gain his ends was prepared to go to any lengths of malice. He claimed that Horus was illegitimate, and that therefore he himself was the heir, and so the matter was brought before the great council of gods. When the events described in the papyrus begin the litigation is said to have already lasted eighty years, and the temper of the gods is rapidly growing shorter!

<sup>1</sup> "The Chester Beatty Papyri. No. 1."

First one and then the other of the two contestants advances his claim, and for the moment seems to be gaining ground, but the council is quite incapable of making up its mind. Only after an elaborate, and to us revolting, exhibition of cunning, is the sovereignty of Egypt at last awarded to the son of Osiris. The story is one of the most forceful in Egyptian literature and at the same time undoubtedly the most amusing. The incredible rudeness of the gods to each other, the touchiness of all concerned—at one time the Sun-god is so angered by a sarcastic remark made by a member of the council that he retires to his tent and has to be coaxed out—the indecision of the council, which is swayed to first one side and then the other, all these features of the story transform the Egyptian gods into concrete beings before our eyes, and yet throughout they do not lose their dignity as immortals, for the Sun-god is, as of old, the “Master of the Universe,” and Set daily slays for him his enemies, voyaging in the celestial “Boat of Millions.”

## CHAPTER V

### A GOODLY BURIAL IN THE NECROPOLIS

THE Lady Hentmehyt, wife of Zedkhonsu, steward of the temple of Amon-Rē at Karnak, and herself a "musician-priestess" of that god, had been lying seriously ill for a week.

It was only a fortnight previously that Zedkhonsu had passed to Osiris, the victim of some internal complaint which the physicians could not understand, and now his wife lay at death's door. Overcome with grief at her husband's death she had insisted on accompanying the body when it was ferried over the river to the place of embalming, on a day when the chill wind of winter was blowing, and had contracted a cold which before long developed into pneumonia. A priest-doctor from the sanctuary of Thōth was summoned at once, and lost no time in reciting a powerful incantation which he had never known to fail in cases of colds, and which ran as follows:

"Run thou out, O cold! Son of a cold! Who breakest down the bones, destroyest the skull, disturbest the brain, and dost cause to ache the seven openings<sup>1</sup> in the heads of the Followers of Horus, who turn to Thōth! Behold, I

<sup>1</sup> i.e. eyes, nostrils, mouth and ears.

have brought the remedy against thee, the potion against thee, even the milk of one who hath borne a boy, and odorous gum! May it drive thee forth! May it force thee out! May it force thee out! May it drive thee forth! Come forth upon the ground! Rot! Rot! Rot! Rot!"

But despite the worthy man's efforts his patient grew steadily worse; the malady was beyond his powers. All day Nezmet stayed beside her mother's bed, fanning her with a palm leaf and anointing her forehead with cooling unguent. At last, when Rē' had dipped behind the mountain of Manu, the end came, and Nezmet cast herself weeping at the foot of the bed. Hentmehyt had joined her husband in the kingdom of Osiris.

The death of the mistress of the house was the signal for what would seem to us an extravagant exhibition of mourning. Nezmet and her attendant women rushed out into the street uttering loud cries of lamentation, tore open their dresses and defiled their heads with mud and dust. All through the northern quarter of Thebes they walked, until they reached the house of Nesamon, the brother of Hentmehyt. When Nezmet told him of her mother's death he immediately joined the procession of women, his fine linen clothes torn and his elaborately curled wig bespattered with dust, beating his breast and groaning aloud.

On arriving at the house of death Nesamon promised to make all arrangements for the funeral, at once sending the *major-domo* down to the river to charter a boat for conveying the corpse to the place

of embalming. Meanwhile Nezmet and the other women carefully washed the body of Hentmehyt and wrapped it in clean linen.

When the *major-domo* returned he was accompanied by two men drawing a light sledge behind them, and on this the corpse, still resting on its couch, was reverently placed. Accompanied by Nesamon the men drew the corpse as far as the quay, where boatmen lifted the couch and its burden on board a waiting ferry-boat, in which the party crossed the river. Arrived at the other side a sledge similar to the first was procured, and the corpse was drawn along to the place where it was to be rendered immortal.

Now, although embalming was practised on such a large scale in ancient Egypt, and although the west bank of Thebes was one vast factory for the making of mummies and funeral furniture, there was no such thing as a permanent building in which the process of embalming took place. A special shed of a light and temporary nature was erected for each person who was to be mummified, and was dismantled when the work was finished. And so, as Nesamon and his sad procession drew near their destination, a veritable township of booths and tents met their gaze.

The place was surrounded by a mud-brick wall through which a gate gave entrance, and here Nesamon and his men announced their arrival to the door-keeper and waited. After a few minutes two embalmers, naked save for a loin cloth, appeared

at the gate, and conducted them to the showrooms, a series of huts where models of mummies and mummy-cases were on view, and also specimens of funeral furniture. Here Nesamon saw, laid out on tables, a series of beautiful miniature mummies, carved in wood and painted in bright colours, illustrating the different grades of mummy which were made for the various prices charged.<sup>1</sup> Since his family was one of the wealthiest in Thebes, and since the body of Zedkhonsu himself had been handed over, ten days ago, for the most expensive method of embalming, it was only fitting that Hentmehyt also should have of the best.

Having made his choice Nesamon passed on to select the remaining portion of the burial equipment, the inner and outer coffins, canopic jars, *ushabti*-figures, a copy of the Book of the Dead and other things which will be described in detail later. The process of mummification occupied a period of seventy days, and it was plain, therefore, that the mummy of Zedkhonsu would be ready some time before that of his wife, who had followed him so soon, but Nesamon gave instructions that it was to be kept until that of Hentmehyt was ready also, and both were then to be delivered to the relations on the day of the funeral. Having thus made arrangements Nesamon returned to the city to comfort his sorrowing niece, leaving his sister to the embalmers' care.

<sup>1</sup> In the time of the Greek writer Diodorus (about 40 B.C.) the most expensive method cost about £250 in our money.

Now in ancient Egypt mummification was regarded not merely as the work of an undertaker but as a most sacred religious ceremony, for the whole process from beginning to end was an imitation of what had been done to Osiris, god of the dead and ruler of the Underworld. In the dim ages of the past the divine Osiris (Plate XVIII, fig. 1) had reigned over Egypt as king, but had been foully murdered by his brother Set, the arch-enemy of righteousness. Not content with this bloody deed Set had hewn his brother's body into fourteen pieces and scattered them throughout the country. But Isis (Plate XVIII, fig. 2), the faithful consort of Osiris, did not rest until she had collected and re-assembled her husband's dismembered body, after which the jackal-headed god, Anubis, mummified it with supernatural skill. Then, by the force of magic power, Osiris was brought back to life, and the evil designs of Set were eventually defeated.

Nor was this the end of the story; Osiris was established as king of the Underworld, the land of departed spirits, yet his resurrection was witnessed every year by the inhabitants of Egypt. For Osiris was the life-giving water of the Nile, the black fertile soil of Egypt deposited by the river, and also the green vegetation which grew so abundantly upon it. He was, in fact, the changing face of Nature, and in the yearly decay of plants and crops and the dwindling of the Nile his death was manifest, while the swelling inundation and renewed growth of vegetation which followed constituted the god's triumphant resurrection.



All men and women could, if they wished, obtain life after death as he had done, only they must undergo the same mysterious rites. Hence all the ceremonies of embalming sought to reproduce the treatment which the body of Osiris had undergone at the hands of Anubis. The embalmer, during parts of the process, actually impersonated Anubis himself, wearing a mask in the form of a jackal's head, while lector-priests were regularly in attendance reciting magical texts which corresponded to the various operations. Let us see how the embalmers treat the body of Hentmehyt.<sup>1</sup>

First of all they strip the corpse, lay it upon a wooden board, and prepare to remove the brain. This is accomplished by forcing a chisel up the nose and through the ethmoid bone. A metal probe, hooked at the end, is next inserted into the head through the opening just made, and the brain broken up into fragments. These fragments are then removed by means of a twisted rod used as a spatula. The mouth is next washed out and stuffed with linen soaked in resin, and pads of linen are placed over the sunken eyes and the eyelids drawn down over them.

The next stage is to remove the entrails; a man carefully draws an ink line on the body's left flank, and another cuts an incision along it with a knife. Through this wound and through another made in the diaphragm the embalmer inserts his hand,

<sup>1</sup> The following account is based upon the article "Making a Mummy" by W. R. Dawson, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. XIII, pp. 40 ff

severs the internal organs and extracts them all, leaving only the heart (and perhaps the kidneys) in position. The Egyptians believed the heart to be the seat of consciousness, the mind of man, and it was therefore very important that it should stay where it was, attached to its large vessels, and continue to be the "ruler" of the dead person's body when life was eventually given back to it.

The body was now ready for the salt bath, in which it must soak for many days. This bath was probably a large jar, in which the corpse was placed with its knees drawn up to its chin, the head only projecting above the fluid. In order, therefore, to prevent the head from decaying a thick coating of resinous paste was applied to it first.

Meanwhile, treatment was given to the viscera which had been removed. These were separately embalmed and placed in four alabaster jars, the stoppers of which were carved to represent the heads of the four sons of Horus. These deities are usually represented in pictures as dead gods—i.e., in mummy form. One, called Imseti, had a man's head; another, called Hapy, the head of a baboon; the third had the head of a jackal and was called Duamutef ("Adorer-of-his-mother"), while the last, Kebehsnēuf ("Pleaser-of-his-brethren") was hawk-headed. In the painted scene, found in almost every copy of the Book of the Dead, which shows Osiris enthroned in his Hall of Judgment, the four sons of Horus are often depicted standing on a lotus flower before him. Each of the entrails placed in

the Canopic jars was identified with one of the four gods; the liver with Imseti, the lungs with Hapy, the stomach with Duamutef, and the intestines with Kebehsnēuf. The jars themselves, on the other hand, although their stoppers represented the heads of these gods, were thought of as the goddesses Isis, Nephthys, Neith and Selket respectively, each of whom gave her protection to the god—i.e. the entrail—within her. A hieroglyphic inscription was cut on each jar, which was nearly the same in every case; for example, that on the jar of Imseti reads:

“Words spoken by Isis: I clasp my two arms about him who is in me. I extend my protection to Imseti who is in me, even the Osiris,<sup>1</sup> the musician-priestess of Amon, Hentmehyt.”

After many days, when the body of Hentmehyt is taken from the salt bath, it presents a melancholy appearance. All the fatty portions of the body have been dissolved away, and the dead woman now consists only of bone and skin, the “underlying muscular tissue and the flesh reduced to a spongy mass.”<sup>2</sup> The *epidermis*, too, has peeled off, and, in order to prevent the finger and toe nails from being carried off with it, the embalmers had carefully cut the skin below each nail before placing the body in the salt bath, leaving a thimble of skin secured with a twist of wire. The corpse is now straightened out into a horizontal position, and the

<sup>1</sup> Every dead person was given the title “Osiris” because he or she was thought to become identified with the god.

<sup>2</sup> Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

important process of desiccation is performed, for the body must be entirely freed from the moisture which it has acquired in the bath. We do not actually know how this was done, but either the heat of the sun or a slow fire, or both, must have been employed.

All is ready now for the final stages of mummification. The entire body is dressed with an application of resin mixed with natron, or salt, and animal fat, and wads of linen are dipped in this mixture and packed into the body-cavity. The embalming wound in the mummy's side is covered with a wax plate engraved with the sacred Eye of Horus, the cranium is packed with linen soaked in resin and the nostrils plugged in the same way. More resinous paste is now applied to the body, and the elaborate task of bandaging begins. While this last process is going on, a *kher-heb* or lector-priest recites from a papyrus-roll prayers and spells appropriate to each limb which is being bandaged. The embalmers also place amulets of great magical power on the body, and these, too, have formulae connected with them which are recited by the priest (Plate xxvi, fig. 2). Around Hentmehyt's neck are fastened three of the most important of these amulets, the *Ded*, the Girdle-tie of Isis, and the Papyrus Sceptre. The first is made of gold, and is believed to represent the backbone of Osiris; it will therefore preserve the dead person's backbone for her. The second is of red jasper, symbolising the blood of Isis, and the third, representing the papyrus-sceptre which Isis holds in her hand, is of green felspar. On

other parts of the mummy many amulets are placed, models of Pharaoh's crowns made of blue faïence, two mysterious fingers of obsidian, and, mighty in its potency, a model of the Eye of Horus. This last named object was throughout Egyptian history regarded with the utmost reverence, for tradition taught that, after the murder of Osiris by Set, Horus, son of Osiris, had engaged his father's murderer in bloody conflict, during which, though finally victorious, Horus had his eye torn out and mutilated by his opponent. Thōth, however, healed the eye and restored it to Horus, who then gave it to his dead father to eat, whereupon the latter instantly revived. According to another legend the Eye was that of the Sun-god—that is to say the Sun itself—which had strayed away from its place but was brought back safely by Thōth.

But the most important amulet of all those placed upon the mummy is the Heart-scarab, suspended from the neck upon a gold wire. This object, made of a hard green stone, is shaped in the form of a large scarab over four inches in length, and on the base is inscribed Chapter XXXB of the Book of the Dead. The scarab itself, being the symbol of creative power, is intended to give life back to the heart, but the text carved upon it is inspired by a very different idea. The Egyptians are afraid that, when the terrible moment arrives in which the human heart is weighed before Osiris in the scales of Truth, all its sinful actions will at once be revealed. Hence the heart must, in the interest

of its owner, be *prevented* from betraying him or her, and consequently we find the following words inscribed upon the Heart-Scarab:

"O my heart of my mother! Of my heart of my mother! O my heart of my transformations! Do not stand up against me as a witness. Do not create opposition against me as a witness. Do not create opposition against me among the assessors. Do not weigh heavy against me in presence of the keeper of the scales. Thou art my *ka* which is in my body, the *Khnum*<sup>1</sup> who makes my limbs to prosper."

The final bandaging has by now been completed, and the mummy (Plate xxvii, fig 2) is ready to be put into its coffin. The cover of this coffin (Plate xxvii, fig. 1) is a beautiful piece of craftsmanship, and represents Hentmehyt herself, wearing a long black wig, and with her arms crossed over her breast. The whole coffin is of wood heavily gilded, with the exception of the elaborately waved wig, which is black, and is covered with ornamentation moulded in plaster beneath the gilt. A gold bandlet runs around the head, and a small sheaf of lotus flowers droops over the brow. In the golden face of Hentmehyt the pupils of the eyes and the eyebrows are inlaid with black obsidian. Around her neck is a broad garland of flowers, and she wears bracelets upon her arms. Below the arms is modelled a rectangular ornament, the design of which shows the deceased adoring the Sun-god Rē' in his boat. On either side of this pectoral the Eye of Horus is represented, and underneath, Nūt,

<sup>1</sup> A god. See p. 65.

## 112 EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

the sky-goddess, spreads her protecting wings over the body. The single bandage which runs down a mummy from head to foot and three which cross it transversely are represented below the goddess Nūt, and the spaces between are filled with pictures of the gods Imseti, Hapy, Anubis and Duamutef. Over the feet Isis and Nephthys are depicted; under the feet Isis again is shown, kneeling with upraised arms, with an inscription which reads:

“Words spoken by Isis the great: ‘My arms are behind thee to protect thy body, O Osiris Hentmehyt.’”

The modelled bandages on the mummy-case bear the name of Hentmehyt and religious formulae.

The embalmers now carefully place the mummy inside the coffin, but before setting the cover in place they put a special inner cover over the mummy itself. This cover is of wood richly gilded, and the upper part, as far down as the goddess Nūt, is very similar to the cover of the coffin described above. The lower half, however, shows religious scenes cut free in the wood against a backing of linen. At the top we see two representations of Thōth kneeling to present the Eye of Horus to Osiris; below, the deceased is depicted standing and adoring Hapy, Imseti, Anubis, Duamutef and Kebehsnēuf. Over the feet Isis and Nephthys are shown as on the coffin cover. The latter is now fixed in place, and the whole coffin is then placed inside yet another which much resembles the inner one in general form and appearance.

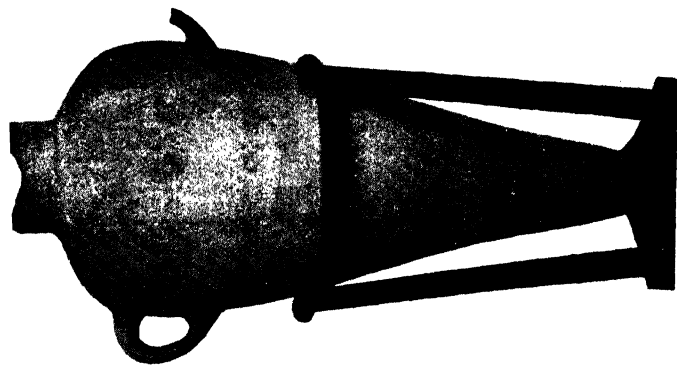


Fig. 1

POTTERY WINE-JAR, WITH INK-INSCRIPTION GIVING DATE AND BRAND OF VINTAGE. *British Museum*



Fig. 2

LEADEN ANGLE-PIECE AND STRAINER FOR SIPHON, USED FOR DRINKING WINE. (See page 52).

On the left is a small leaden dipper. From El 'Amarneh, *British Museum*.



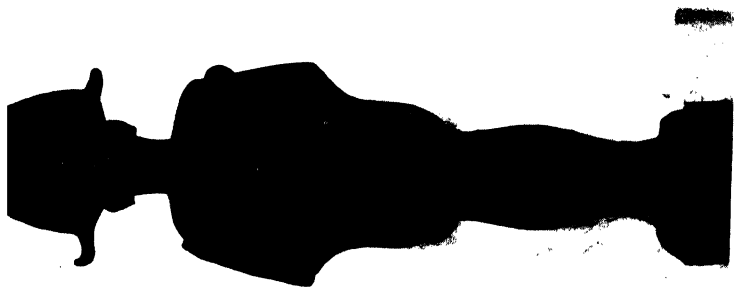


Fig 1.  
BRONZE SEATED STATUETTE OF  
OSIRIS, GOD OF THE DEAD.  
[*British Museum No. 12592*]



BRONZE SEATED STATUETTE OF  
ISIS-HATHOR, THE CONSORT OF  
OSIRIS. SHE IS SUCKLING HORUS,  
THEIR INFANT SON

The process of making Hentmehyt into a mummy is now completed, having occupied a period of seventy days, and she is ready to be returned to her family, together with the mummy of her husband, on the day of the funeral.

Let us first, however, examine two other items of her burial equipment—her *ushabti* figures and her Book of the Dead. These former are attractive little statuettes representing Hentmehyt in mummy form, some of blue glazed faïence, others of carved and painted wood (Plate xxviii). These little people carry hoes in their hands and baskets on their backs, and are intended to take the place of the deceased if she is unfortunate enough to be conscripted for agricultural work in the kingdom of Osiris. The VIth Chapter of the Book of the Dead, which is carved on the front of the wooden figures, is intended as a spell to bring them to life. It runs as follows:

“Chapter of causing the *ushabti*-figure to perform tasks in the Necropolis. Recitation by the mistress of the house and singer of Amon-Rê', Hentmehyt, justified: O thou *ushabti*-figure, if the Osiris Hentmehyt, justified, is appointed to perform any of the tasks that are performed in the Necropolis . . . be thou appointed every time in my place, to cultivate the fields, to flood the meadows, or to carry the sand of the East unto the West. Then shalt thou say: 'Here am I!'"

Sometimes a very large number of these figures were buried with people of high rank, as many as three hundred and sixty-five, one for every day of the year, while over seven hundred were found in the tomb of Seti I, the second king of the Nineteenth Dynasty.

Now let us turn to the magnificent copy of the Book of the Dead which Nesamon has purchased for his dead sister. It is a roll of papyrus sixty feet in length, covered with columns of hieroglyphic text and brilliantly coloured pictures (Plate xxix). The religious composition known to Egyptologists to-day as *The Book of the Dead* was not called so by the Egyptians; the title was actually *The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day*—that is to say, a knowledge of the book would enable every dead person to leave his tomb after death and walk abroad once more in the sunlight. The Book of the Dead was extremely ancient in origin, and consisted of different magical spells which would enable the dead Egyptian to obtain immediately the immortality for which he longed so much. The first series of such spells which Egypt has handed down to us are the Pyramid Texts; these are inscribed on the walls of the pyramid tombs of the Pharaohs of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties (about 2600 B.C.). The second series which we know are the Coffin Texts, which were written on the rectangular wooden coffins of the Middle Kingdom (2000 B.C.). The last series is preserved in papyri of the New Kingdom and later, and in this portions of the Pyramid Texts and of the Coffin Texts are combined with new material.

At the time of which we are speaking the edition of the Book of the Dead then in use had been compiled by the priests of the Sun-god at Heliopolis, hence the god of Thebes, Amon, finds no place

in it, the Sun-god and Osiris playing the chief parts. To describe fully the contents of this religious book would be impossible here, but a brief account of its more important features may be given. The section which first strikes the eye of a reader when the papyrus of Hentmehyt is unrolled before him is that dealing with the judgment after death. The coloured illustration shows the Hall of the Two Truths, in which Osiris sits enthroned as king of the Underworld and judge of the dead. The god's throne is set within a shrine made in the form of a coffin, and his flesh is painted green, for he represents the continual resurrection of Nature in the budding vegetation of Spring. On his head rests the *Atef*-crown, a tall white cap on either side of which is fixed the feather of Truth; his whole body is swathed tightly in mummy-bandages, out of which only his face and hands emerge, and he grasps the *was*-sceptre, always held by gods, and the shepherd's crook and herdsman's whip, symbols of sovereignty. Isis, the sister-wife of Osiris, and Nephthys, his other sister, stand behind the throne, their hands resting affectionately upon the shoulders of their brother. In front of Osiris grows a lotus flower, whereupon stand his four grandchildren, the sons of Horus. At the top of the picture in a long row the principal gods of Egypt sit in state; they are the colleagues of Osiris in the dread task of judging the departed. At the left of the picture our friend Hentmehyt is shown entering the Hall, and, if we look at another part of the papyrus, we

## 116 EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

can read the words with which she salutes her judges:<sup>1</sup>

"Hail to thee! Great god, lord of the Two Truths! I have come unto thee, my lord, I am brought that I may behold thy beauties. I know thee, and I know thy name, and I know the names of the forty-two gods who are with thee in this Hall of the Two Truths, who live as wardens of sinners and feed upon their blood on this day when characters are reckoned in the presence of Unnefer<sup>2</sup>. . . . Behold me! I am come unto thee! I have brought unto thee righteousness and have driven out evil for thee! I have not done evil to mankind. I have not oppressed my relations. I have not done iniquity in the place of righteousness. . . . I have not blasphemed a god. I have not defrauded the orphan of his possessions. I have not done what a god abhors. I have not maligned a servant to his superior. I have not caused pain. I have not caused hunger. I have not caused weeping. I have done no murder. . . . I am pure! I am pure! I am pure! I am pure! . . ."

In this manner Hentmehyt declares to the gods that she is free of sin, and demands that they acquit her. But she must do more than this. It is necessary for her to address each of the forty-two judges separately, and in his presence deny one of forty-two specified sins. When this is finished the most terrible part of the ordeal has to be faced. The heart of Hentmehyt is weighed in the scales of Truth. These scales are set up in the middle of the Hall, and are worked by the god Anubis. In one pan the dead woman's heart is placed, in the other the symbol of Truth, a feather. Behind

<sup>1</sup> Chapter CXXV (Introduction) of the Book of the Dead.

<sup>2</sup> A name of Osiris.

Anubis stands Thōth, the ibis-headed scribe of the gods, who notes down the result with his pen and ink. Behind him again sits an unpleasant monster called Āmmūt,<sup>1</sup> part crocodile, part lioness and part hippopotamus, who waits to devour condemned souls. The weighing is also watched by three other interesting creatures, the brick on which Hentmehyt's mother sat to give birth to her daughter, here given a human head, the *Shay* or "Fate" of the dead woman, shown in human form, and the human-headed bird, called the *Ba*, which was the soul. (See also Plate xxix<sup>2</sup>). All three seem to wait breathless for the result, but they need have no fear. Hentmehyt is proclaimed victorious, and led by Horus, son of Osiris, she approaches the throne of the supreme judge. Horus there announces to his father that Hentmehyt has been tried and found righteous, and Osiris confirms the judgment, appointing her a place in his kingdom.

But this section which we have just described, although important, is only one of many. There are spells for preventing one's heart from being taken away, for enabling one to sail with Rē' across the sky in his boat, for passing certain doorways guarded by gods, and so on, often illustrated with pictures. The copy of the Book of the Dead which is included among the funeral furniture of Hentmehyt has not been made specially for her, however,

<sup>1</sup> The name means "Devourer-of-the-Dead."

<sup>2</sup> The most important part of man's spiritual being, however, was the *Ka*. This is considered to have been either a supernatural "double," or else an ancestral spirit, i.e. "totem".

as is sometimes the case, but was one kept in stock by the undertakers, the places where the name of the dead person should occur having been left blank; these have now been filled up with Hentmehyt's name and titles. It is probably a good thing that we cannot spare the time for a closer examination of her beautiful Book of the Dead, for if we looked into it we should probably find that its magnificence was confined to its appearance only. Copies of the Book of the Dead sold by the undertakers of Ancient Egypt are packed with careless mistakes. Chapters are often copied out twice, sections are left out, chapters are given wrong titles and so on, because these papyri were produced in such large numbers and often trouble was only taken to make them look attractive. In earlier times the scribes had been far more careful, but now the spirit of carelessness was abroad.

All was now ready for the funeral. On the appointed day Nesamon and Nezmeh, accompanied by a troop of hired women mourners and a large number of relatives and friends, crossed the river early in the morning. The mortuary priests, who were to conduct the funeral, and the undertakers' men were awaiting the party's arrival at the quay of the Necropolis, the mummies of Zedkhonsu and Hentmehyt having been brought thither together with all the funerary furniture. As soon as the relatives had landed the funeral procession was formed up, and we may describe it as follows:

In the front walk men carrying various important objects required by the dead. One man has two white statuettes of Pharaoh wearing the red crown upon his head. Another carries a wooden stand in which are fitted three alabaster jars containing food or precious unguents. Behind him again come men bearing on their shoulders long wooden chests which contain a number of ornaments, such as gold pectorals in the form of vultures, a circlet for the hair, a pair of gold bracelets inlaid with lapis lazuli and other stones, a gold signet ring, and a mirror of polished bronze mounted on an ivory handle.

Next we see two parties of men dragging behind them small wooden shrines mounted on a sledge. Inside these shrines are the canopic jars which contain the embalmed viscera of the dead, and this part of the procession is therefore preceded by a lector-priest who chants solemnly as he walks along. Behind these come the dead themselves. Each mummy rests upon a couch beneath an ornate canopy, the whole mounted on a sledge and drawn by oxen. They are accompanied by a priest who burns incense in a censer and pours libations of water upon the ground, while before and behind the sledges walks a woman mourner. One of these women is called the "Great Kite" and the other the "Little Kite." They are impersonating the goddesses Isis and Nephthys who, when their brother Osiris was found murdered, changed themselves into kites and fluttered around his body uttering screams of lamentation. Another priest walks



behind the mummies, and he is followed by a group of high dignitaries from Thebes, influential friends of Zedkhonsu, carrying staves in their hands.

All the time a religious service is being recited by the priests: "In peace, in peace, unto the Great God!"<sup>1</sup> cries one, addressing the dead, and the Theban nobles take up the cry: "Proceed in peace, in peace, unto thy tomb in the necropolis! Receive food-offerings among the great ones in the following of the Great God!" In company with the nobles walk Nesamon and other male relatives of the departed, while the rear of the procession is brought up by the women mourners, led by Nezmet and the female relatives, all beating their breasts and lamenting in chorus, describing in various dirges the remarkable qualities of Zedkhonsu and Hentmehyt.

After about an hour's journey the procession reaches the foot of the western hills. On every side, wherever the eye turns, the face of the rock is honeycombed with tombs, those "houses of eternity" in which the dead citizens of Thebes have their abode, and from which they can still contemplate the city of the living. It is in one of these tombs that our friends are to be buried, so let us enter it before the funeral procession arrives, and spend a few minutes looking about us.

The ranges of hills which enclose Egypt on either side are, for hundreds of miles, of limestone, a material easy to work, and therefore allowing of the preparation of rock tombs without much

<sup>1</sup> Osiris.

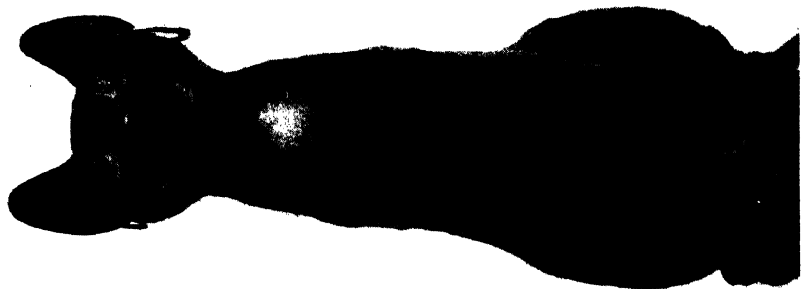
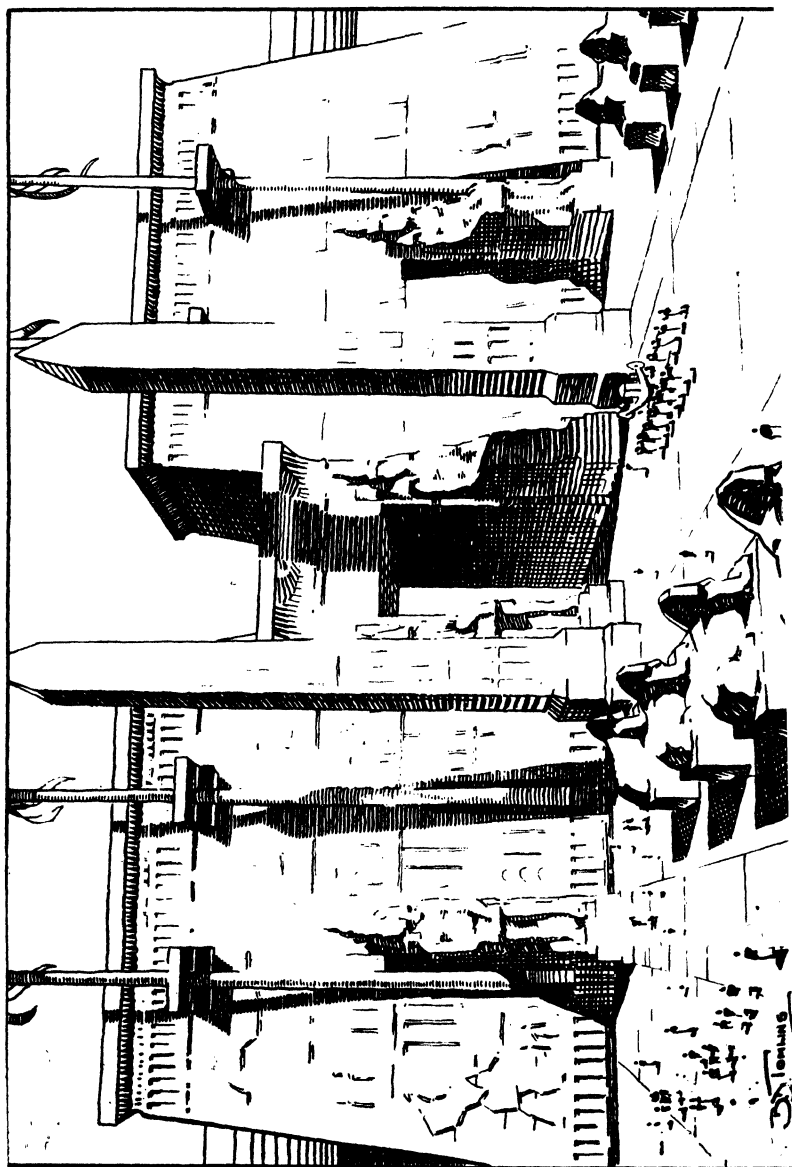


Fig. 1

MUMMY OF A SACRED BULL OF THE ROMAN PERIOD  
*British Museum No. 66713*



difficulty. The tomb of Zedkhonsu and his wife is approached through an outer courtyard, open to the sky. From this courtyard we pass into a short entrance-passage which leads into a hall running across the main axis of the tomb. A long passage leads from this hall into a square chamber, in the back-wall of which is cut a niche containing statues of Zedkhonsu and Hentmehyt hewn out of the rock. At the back of the square chamber, and partly under the niche, a gaping shaft is seen in the floor; this leads down through the rock to the burial-chamber itself.

The rough stone surfaces of the walls throughout the tomb have been covered with plaster and painted with pictures and hieroglyphic inscriptions in brilliant colours, and these are carefully arranged so that their positions in the tomb shall accord with their meaning. Thus, in the outer rooms we are shown the dead man (often accompanied by his wife) indulging in favourite pastimes, or enjoying the pleasures of home-life on earth. On one wall they sit in a garden arbour receiving fruits and other produce from their servants, and further on Zedkhonsu inspects the labourers at their work on his estate. There we see the tasks of ploughing, sowing and reaping; the corn is trodden out by oxen, while their driver sings a merry song written above him in hieroglyphs:

“Thresh for yourselves! Thresh for yourselves! O oxen, thresh for yourselves, thresh for yourselves! Straw to eat, and grain for your masters! Don't be slack, for it's cool weather!”

The grain is then piled up in heaps and measured, the figures being busily noted down by scribes armed with pens and palettes.

As we penetrate further into the tomb, however, the character of the painted scenes change. The walls of the long passage leading to the square chamber or shrine are given up to pictures of the funeral procession, and of the mysterious rites performed on the mummy before it is finally hidden from the light of day. The shrine itself, being directly above the burial chamber, is devoted entirely to representations of the cult of the dead, and of the worship of gods connected with the tomb. Here are Hentmehyt and Zedkhonsu shown seated before tables piled high with meat, vegetables and cooling drinks, or bowing in supplication before "Osiris, Chief of the Westerners," and Anubis, "who is in the god's booth,"<sup>1</sup> while the statues carved in the niche await the actual mortuary services to be performed in their presence by a priest.

But by this time the funeral procession has made its way up the winding path, and the coffins are being unloaded on to the rock platform in front of the tomb. At this point the mourners are greeted by two men who perform a ritual dance. They are called "Muu," and wear strange conical head-dresses somewhat resembling the straw envelopes in which wine bottles are packed to-day.

It is here, on the rock platform, that the most important rite of the funeral is to be performed

<sup>1</sup> The embalmer's shed.

before the mummies are finally deposited in their place of rest, namely the ceremony of "Opening the mouth" (Plate xxx). The bodies of Zedkhonsu and Hentmehyt have been delivered to the embalmer who has, for his part, rendered them as imperishable as the cunning of man can ensure. Preserved, anointed, provided with powerful amulets, they need now but one thing more—life. And that is what this vital ceremony can give them. The whole service recalls the legend of Osiris and his resurrection. Thus, the mummies are held upright during the service by the embalmer, who wears a jackal-mask over his head, impersonating Anubis who embalmed Osiris, while another priest acts the part of "Beloved Son"—that is, Horus, the son and avenger of the murdered god.

The service begins with the purification of the mummies with holy water sprinkled from different vessels, and abundant fumigation with incense. Then, after other ceremonies, a bull is slaughtered, and its foreleg presented to the mouths of the dead. Then the principal officiant, the priest called in Egyptian *Sem*, wearing a sacred vestment of leopard-skin, touches the mouths of Hentmehyt and Zedkhonsu with various magical instruments, one of them being a rod ending in the head of a ram and called *Urt-hekau*, "Great Magician," at the same time pronouncing the words of the ritual: "I open thy mouth with the Great Magician wherewith the mouth of every god is opened!" The *Sem* now goes to find the "Beloved Son," and having found him

brings him into the presence of the dead that he may complete the rite.

The mummies are now no longer dead things. They have been given the use of mouth and eyes and all the other functions of the body. It is time, therefore, that they be fed, and so the remaining ceremonies consist of a preparatory toilet leading up to the funeral banquet itself. In this banquet not only the dead but also the living take part, and outside the house of death they feast late into the afternoon. But at length the last farewell must be taken. Nezmet casts herself down sobbing piteously before the mummies of her parents, which are now replaced in their coffins and carried on the shoulders of sturdy men into the dark tomb. She can bear no more sorrow, and will not enter to see her mother and father lowered down the shaft into the underground chamber where they will lie forever. . . .

It is done. To-morrow, when the burial shaft has been filled with rubble as protection against robbers, the dead will be sealed up for eternity. As the tired procession slowly makes its way back to the river, Nesamon supporting the weeping daughter on his arm, only the intonation of a priest is heard in the silence of the desert:

"O Steward of the House of Amon-Rē', King of gods, Zedkhonsu, justified! Mayst thou enter and go forth from the West, mayst thou stride through the door of the Underworld, mayst thou adore Rē' when he rises in the mountain, mayst thou worship him when he sets in the horizon, mayst thou receive oblations and be satisfied with food upon the altar of the Lord of Eternity!"

## CHAPTER VI

### LABOURERS AND CRAFTSMEN

THE lowest person in the social scale was, as we have already said, the serf who lived on the land and who was bought and sold with it. This peasant class formed the bulk of the population at all times, and their lot could never have been too easy. During the New Kingdom, with which period we are chiefly concerned in this book, all land, other than temple property, in theory belonged to the king, and was either leased out by him to various owners or retained for the purposes of revenue. The peasants owed obedience to whatever officials had been placed over them, and were responsible for the cultivation of the soil, from the produce of which enough was allowed to them for their livelihood. This was their wages, for in all professions wages were paid in kind, a metal currency not being in existence.

Ploughing, sowing and reaping, the usual occupations of agriculture, formed the peasant's task (Plate xxxi), but in the land of Egypt was added the difficult problem of irrigation. Rainfall being exceedingly rare in Upper Egypt, and in Lower Egypt insufficient for agricultural purposes, the whole country, were it not for the Nile, would be a barren



desert. As it is, however, that marvellous river, which must indeed have seemed to the Egyptians a supernatural being, turns the land into one of the most fertile tracts in the world. Every year, during the month of June,<sup>1</sup> the river begins to swell until it finally overflows its banks, the highest point being reached in October, and deposits over the surrounding country a layer of rich fertilising mud. In order to make the most of the overflow an elaborate system of irrigation was required, by which the water could be conducted through the fields, or raised from one level to another. If for any reason the river failed to rise to the necessary height the country was faced with disaster, and starvation became rife. Hence a close watch was kept throughout the year upon the changing level of the Nile in order to forecast the conditions of the coming season.

In describing an Egyptian tomb I have already made some mention of the scenes of daily life painted upon its walls, and referred to the pictures of sowing, ploughing, reaping and threshing which usually occur. Such wall-paintings bring us very close indeed to the peasants and workmen of ancient Egypt, and often enable us to follow their conversations, for these are inscribed in hieroglyphs beside the pictures. One of the best examples is the series of scenes in the tomb of Pahery, who lived during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Tuth-

<sup>1</sup> In ancient Egypt it was believed that at this time the tears of the goddess Isis, weeping for her husband Osiris, fell into the Nile and caused the inundation.

mosis III, and was buried at El-Kab. Pahery was prince of the Eileithyapolite nome, the third nome of Upper Egypt, and held important offices under the king. In these pictures we see the great lord come forth to inspect the work which is being done in the district, and his figure, drawn several times larger than the others, dominates the scene. He is accompanied by three servants who carry various things which their master may need, including his sandals and a light stool, the latter in case he desires to rest.

The ploughs are drawn by oxen, and an inscription above describes the scene: "A fine day and one is cool. The oxen are drawing the plough. The sky (i.e. weather) is agreeable to our heart; let us work for the prince!" The ploughman who is guiding his instrument cries to another man: "Hasten, you in the front! Drive the oxen! Behold, the prince stands watching." In another part of the field the plough is being drawn by four men, the guiding being done by an old man, while a boy sows the corn. Pahery, who stands nearby, urges them to work faster, saying! "Hasten ye! The fields are broken up (?) and the inundation was very great!" To this one of the four men replies: "We are doing so. Behold us! Do not fear on account of the fields, they are in excellent condition," and the old man, in support of their statement, returns: "How good is your remark, my son! The year is good, free from ills and flourishing in all herbs. Moreover, the calves are exceeding good!"

In another part of the estate men and women are reaping corn and flax. The inscription above reads:

"In answering chant they say:  
 'On this fine day come out onto the land!  
 The north wind has come forth,  
 The sky is agreeable to our heart,  
 Let us work as much as we can.'"

As soon as the flax has been pulled up by the roots it is carried away to an old man who tears off the seed-heads with a large comb. He is a boastful fellow and exclaims, "If you bring me eleven thousand and nine I am the man to strip them!" To which the man who is bringing the sheaf replies, "Hasten! Do not chatter, you old —<sup>1</sup> of labourers."

The men reaping corn are cutting it with sickles of wood in which flint teeth are set (Plate xxxi, fig. 2), and one of the reapers has tucked his sickle underneath his arm in order to quench his thirst from a waterpot. Nearby stands a shelter containing an array of wine- and water-jars, outside which an attendant is engaged in fanning two vessels with a palm leaf to keep their contents cool, perhaps in preparation for the monarch's arrival.

When the corn has been cut it is packed into a large basket slung on a pole and carried to the threshing floor. An overseer urges on the men with the basket, saying, "Hasten ye! Quicken your feet! The water has come and is reaching the

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of this word is unknown but it is evidently abusive.

baskets," evidently fearing that the inundation will be on them before the harvest is completed.

The grain is next trodden out upon the threshing floor by oxen, and then winnowed. The latter process is accomplished by tossing the threshed corn into the air with wooden shovels, the winnowers having their hair covered with a cloth to protect it from the chaff. Last of all the separated grain is heaped up and measured, the results being written down by the "scribe of the grain accounts, Zhut-nefer," who sits perched on top of the heap. The corn can now be removed in sacks to the granary, which here consists of a walled enclosure inside which the grain is piled. The more usual type of Egyptian granary, however, was a conical building of brick into which the grain was emptied through an opening near the top, for which purpose it was necessary to ascend a flight of steps. When required the grain could be shovelled out through a door at the bottom.

The life of a peasant was a hard one, unless the officials placed over him had a developed sense of humanity towards their humble inferiors. This, however, was probably not very frequent, it being more likely that the last ounce of work was demanded from the labourers. Nor must we suppose that peculation, of so common occurrence in the East to-day, was absent in ancient Egypt, and owing to this the workers on the land must often have found their wages short or not forthcoming at all.

When they were not employed in agricultural

tasks the peasants of Egypt, *fellahin* as they are called to-day, spent their time in catching fish and trapping birds, or in hunting the small game of the desert. But from time to time they were called upon for work very different from their usual routine—the erection of buildings.

There is nothing among the remains of Egyptian civilisation which impresses the modern world more deeply than the grandeur of its temples and tombs. On either side of the Nile, as one journeys southwards, rise the immense shrines of a long-forgotten faith, mighty pyramids of eternal structure, and temples in whose silent courts the colossal statues of gods and kings (Plate XXI) smile down upon the awed visitor. The question is often asked: How were these great buildings erected in an age when the sciences were in their infancy, and the lack of suitable tools and appliances would seem to render such projects impossible?

We may reply first that in the ancient world time had not acquired the absurdly high value which it possesses to-day. It did not matter very much whether a craftsman spent two years on some masterpiece or ten—the production of the thing itself was the end in view. In this attitude to work may be found a reason for the splendid *perfection* of many masterpieces, whether ancient or modern; lack of hurry, endless concentration, these carry the mind's conception to a victorious accomplishment. Secondly, the use of almost unlimited man-power could largely compensate for

the lack of our modern machinery. The great buildings—all, with few exceptions, either temples or royal tombs—were raised at the command of Pharaoh, and, since his power was absolute over both country and people, he could conscript any number of men for the purpose. Lastly, the fact that professions were nearly always hereditary resulted in the attainment of extraordinary skill both in the use of primitive tools and in the treatment of intractable materials.

During the earlier part of Egyptian history the masses of men employed on building works were native Egyptians, but in the days of the Empire, when Egypt was flooded with Asiatic and Nubian prisoners who had been brought back from foreign campaigns these latter were utilised to a great extent. More important, however, than the sweating masses who formed, as it were, the muscle, were the directing brains, the architects and engineers, and under them the trained craftsmen and artisans. In order to appreciate fully the building triumphs of the Egyptians let us for a moment consider their resources and methods.

The smelting of copper and the use of this metal for tools and weapons were known from pre-dynastic times, but bronze did not come into frequent use till after the Twelfth Dynasty, while iron was only scarcely employed before the tenth century B.C. Hence the men who built the pyramids of Gizeh had only copper and stone tools, though possibly iron chisels were used at this early period on the hardest

stones. The Great Pyramid rises to a height of 451 feet at the present day, but in ancient times, when the outer casing was still in place, it was probably 482 feet high. The base of the pyramid covers an area of nearly 13 acres, while the cubic content of the masonry amounts to 3,057,000 cubic yards. Herodotus tells us that when he visited Egypt, about 450 B.C.—that is to say, well over two thousand years later—he was told that the number of workmen employed on the pyramid had amounted to about 100,000 and that these were employed for three months of every year. These three months were presumably those of the inundation, when field work had largely ceased and the peasants were unoccupied. The same writer also informs us that the building of the actual pyramid took twenty years, and this again is probably true.

The interior mass of the Great Pyramid is constructed, like that of the other two pyramids at Gizeh, of limestone blocks hewn in the neighbourhood, but its outer casing consisted of limestone of a better quality, brought across the river from the quarries of Turra on the eastern bank near Cairo. The problem which appears most puzzling to us of the present day is how the Egyptians contrived to move the enormous weight of stone used for their pyramids, temples and statues (each block of stone in the Great Pyramid has a volume of 40 cubic feet), with the poor means which they possessed. It should not, however, be difficult to answer this question, for the Egyptians have left us a

certain amount of evidence for reconstructing their methods.

To begin with, it is certain that they employed the lever, which would consist simply of a length of tough wood; the use of this instrument to increase human power is one of the first principles of mechanics. Besides this they probably placed wooden rollers under the weights which were being moved, thus greatly facilitating their progress. In order to bring the blocks up to the level of the course which was being built a sloping embankment would be erected against the building, and up this the blocks would be dragged by men working under the lash. When that particular course was completed the angle of the embankment would be altered so as to be ready for the construction of the next. The whole process, of course, was lengthy in the extreme, but, as we have already said, time was no object to the Egyptians. The mud-brick ramp employed in the erection of the great pylon of the temple of Amon-Rē' at Karnak still stands against its outer face, for the pylon was never completed. In regard to the conveyance of colossal statues we are fortunate in having preserved to us a very interesting picture, on the wall of a tomb at El Bersheh. The owner of the tomb, Zhut-hotep by name, was one of the great rulers of the Hare-nome, the fifteenth nome of Upper Egypt, during the Twelfth Dynasty, and the scene in question shows the transport of a colossal statue of the nomarch to be set up in his honour.



On the left we see a huge statue, representing the prince as seated upon a chair, resting on a wooden sledge which is being dragged along by multitudes of men depicted in four registers. Standing upon the knees of the statue is a man clapping his hands, and an inscription tells us that he is giving the time to the troops—i.e. chanting so that they will all pull together—only instead of the “Heave-ho” of our workmen he is singing, “Zhut-hotep beloved of the king,” out of respect to his master. A second man stands upon the statue’s base and pours water from a vessel over the road in front, a religious act, while on the ground a lector-priest burns incense at the same time.

The inscription accompanying this remarkable scene may well be quoted here, for in the nomarch’s own words it vividly describes the happenings of the day on which this heavy labour was accomplished:

“Escorting a statue of 13 cubits, of stone of *Hat-nub*.<sup>1</sup> Lo! very and exceeding difficult was the road on which it came; lo! difficult to the men’s heart was the drawing of the great weight over it, owing to the heavy block of the monolith (?), (made) of hard stone. I caused troops of goodly youths to come for the purpose of making a road for it, together with gangs of stone-masons and quarry-workers, and foremen with them who had understanding. The strong-armed men said: ‘We shall bring it!’ My heart was glad, and all the city exulted. It was very and exceeding good to behold! The old man leaned upon the child; the strong-armed folk together with the weak (?), their heart

<sup>1</sup> The statue was made of alabaster. The alabaster quarries of *Hat-nub* are situated in the desert east of Tell-el-‘Amarneh.

waxed (courageous), their hands were mighty, (each) one among them exerted the strength of a thousand men. Lo! this statue, roughly hewn, came forth from the mountain, exceeding great in weight. Ships manned and filled with costly things were alongside my troops of young men, and recruits bearing lances were beside it. Their talk was in thanksgiving, and of my favours from the king."

The uppermost of the four rows of men dragging the colossus is labelled, "Recruits of the western part of the Hare-nome"; the second row, "Young men of the warriors of the Hare-nome"; the third, "Divisions of priests of the Hare-nome"; and the bottom row, "Recruits of the Eastern part of the Hare-nome." Thus the central position of honour in the picture is given to the men of the priestly and military classes who were called upon for this work, the rest being able-bodied youths recruited from all over Zhut-hotep's district. It is not, of course, surprising that soldiers were employed in such tasks as this, but it is certainly significant that the lower ranks of the priesthood were not exempted from forced labour. One may recall a passage occurring in an address to schoolboys, belonging to the New Kingdom, which exalts the scribe's profession above all others, where this fact is emphasised. "The priest standeth there as an husbandman, and the *uā'b*-priest worketh in the canal . . . he is drenched in the river; it maketh no difference to him whether it be winter or summer, whether the sky (i.e. weather) be windy or rainy,"<sup>1</sup> This passage refers to forced agricultural labour,

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

On Plate xxxii the reader will find a reconstructed scene of the transport of a colossal statue, like that of Zhut-hotep, during the Middle Kingdom. The picture is a photograph of the excellent Diorama exhibited in the Children's Gallery of the Science Museum, South Kensington, in the series illustrating the history of transport through the ages. It will be noticed, however, that the statue represented is that of a king, wearing the royal uraeus on his forehead, for it must have been very seldom indeed that any person other than Pharaoh was allowed to set up a colossal statue like that of Zhut-hotep.

























Another kind of monument which astonishes us to-day is the Egyptian obelisk, for these great shafts of stone, towering up amid the ruins of temples, must have presented a knotty problem to the ancient engineer. The obelisk was a most sacred symbol, consisting of a little pyramid or "pyramidion" upon the top of a square shaft, and it was believed that the Sun-god had first appeared upon this pyramid, the primeval hill, when he rose out of the watery mass of Nūn to create the world. The obelisk of the Middle and New Kingdoms was of a form somewhat different from the earlier variety; the latter was short and stumpy, while the former was lengthened out to a tall shaft of stone. These tall obelisks were usually placed one on either side of the temple door, before the pylon towers. Of all obelisks the pair set up by Queen Hatshepsut at Karnak are the most interesting, both for the character of the woman who had them



*Fig. 2* *[Author]*  
ONE OF THE TWO COLOSSI OF MEMNON,  
AT THEBES. BESIDE THE LEG OF THE  
KING (AMENHOTEP III) STANDS HIS  
QUEEN, TIY



*Fig. 1* *[Author]*  
THE RAMESSEUM, AT THEBES

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| iw-f   | m   | nds   | n   | rnpt  | i   |
| ls-he  | (as)  | townsman  | of  | year  | i   |
| 2.  |  |  |  |  |   |
| iw-f   | hr  | wnm   | t3  | 500   |   |
| ls-he  | upon  | eating  | loaf  | 500,  |   |
| 3.  |  |  |  |  |   |
| rmn  | n   | iw3   | m   | iwf   |   |
| haunch   | of  | ox  | as  | meat,   |   |
| 4.  |  |  |  |  |   |
| hn'  | swri  | hnkt  | ds  | ic  |   |
| and  | drinking  | beer  | jug   | ic  |   |
| 5.  |  |  |   |   |   |
| r-mn-m   | hrw   | pn  |   |   |   |
| unto   | day   | this.   |   |   |   |

SPECIMEN OF EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING, WITH ENGLISH TRANSLITERATION AND LITERAL TRANSLATION

made and for the stupendous engineering achievement which they represent.

Ka-maāt-Rē' Khenemt-Amon Hatshepsut was the daughter of Tuthmosis I, the third king of the Eighteenth Dynasty. On the death of Tuthmosis her half-brother Tuthmosis II, to whom she was married, succeeded as Pharaoh, but was soon relegated to the background by the strong-minded girl and the powerful nobles who supported her. When Tuthmosis II died, after a reign of thirteen years, he was followed by his son Tuthmosis III, who had married Neferurē', the daughter of Hatshepsut. Again, however, the Pharaoh proved to be no match for Hatshepsut, who soon reduced him to helplessness and boldly proclaimed herself king. Henceforward she reigned actually as Pharaoh, assuming male dress and referring to herself as a man in her inscriptions. During her long reign of twenty-two years Egypt enjoyed peace and prosperity, and the two obelisks at Karnak are fitting monuments of her greatness.

These obelisks, of which one lies overthrown, are each formed of a single block of granite, and the obelisk still standing measures 76 feet in height. The granite-quarries from which they were hewn are at Assuan, about 120 miles to the south, and the reader will appreciate the vast difficulties which must have confronted the ancient workmen who had first of all to extract the two blocks, then convey them from the quarries to the Nile and downstream by boat to Thebes, and finally to set them upright

upon their bases in the temple of Amon. The inscription cut upon the base of the standing monument informs us that the work of quarrying occupied only seven months! In this impressive address to future generations Hatshepsut says:

"His<sup>1</sup> Majesty himself saith: 'I declare unto the people who shall come to be after two æons, whose heart shall consider this monument which I have made for my father . . . As I sat in the palace I remembered him who had created me, and my heart led me to make for him two obelisks of fine gold<sup>2</sup>, whose pyramidions should merge with Heaven. . . .

"O ye people who shall see my monument in future years, who shall speak of that which I have made, beware lest ye say: 'I know not, I know not why this was done, the fashioning of a mountain entirely of gold<sup>3</sup> like something of usual occurrence!' I swear as Rē' loves me, as my father Amon praises me, as my nose is refreshed with life and well-being, as I assume the White Crown, as I dawn in the Red Crown, as the Two Gods<sup>4</sup> have united for me their portions, as I rule this land like the son of Isis, as I have waxed mighty like the son of Nūt, as Rē' sets in the Evening Boat, as he endures in the Morning Boat, as he companies with his two mothers in the divine barque, as Heaven abides, as that which he has made endures, as I shall exist unto eternity like an Imperishable<sup>4</sup>, as I shall set in life like Atum, as for the two great obelisks which my Majesty has fashioned of fine gold for my father Amon, in order that my name may abide and endure in this temple for ever and ever, they consist of a single block of hard red granite without join or mend. My Majesty exacted work thereon from the first day of the second month of winter in the

<sup>1</sup> An example of Hatshepsut's custom, already mentioned above, of referring to herself as a man.

<sup>2</sup> From these words it would appear that the obelisks were entirely overlaid with gold.

<sup>3</sup> Horus and Set.

<sup>4</sup> This name was given to the circumpolar stars.

fifteenth year<sup>1</sup> until the last day of the fourth month of summer in the sixteenth year, making seven months of exaction in the mountain.'"

In the temple of Deir-el-Bahri Hatshepsut caused to be carved a series of reliefs depicting the transport on the Nile of two obelisks which may be the very pair just described. An enormous barge has been specially designed to carry them, and on its deck we see the giant monoliths mounted on long sledges and laid base to base, their pyramidions pointing towards bow and stern. The barge is being towed by a number of tug-boats, and accompanied by vessels in which religious ceremonies are being performed.

Let us now imagine that the obelisks have been landed at Thebes and all that remains to do is to set them upright upon their bases. But how? We have come to what is apparently the most difficult part of the whole business. When one considers the elaborate machinery which it was found necessary to prepare in our own day for the erection of the obelisk of Rameses II in the Place de la Concorde at Paris, or for that of the obelisk of Tuthmosis III, better known as Cleopatra's Needle, on the Thames Embankment, one may well be at a loss to explain how these things were done in ancient Egypt. And yet the answer proves fairly simple, if we remember the cardinal principle: "time and labour no object."

In his book, *The Problem of the Obelisks*, Mr. Robert Engelbach of the Cairo Museum suggests

<sup>1</sup> Of Hatshepsut's reign.



what is undoubtedly the most probable method employed by the Egyptian engineers. First of all an embankment of mud brick or earth was erected over the spot where the obelisks were to be set up, sloping down to ground level at one end. From the top of this embankment a vertical shaft of funnel-shape descended through it to the rectangular plinth on which the obelisk was to stand. The shaft was filled up to the top with sand which could be cleared out, when desired, through horizontal galleries pierced in the lower part of the embankment. When all was ready the obelisk, mounted on a sledge, was hauled base foremost up the sloping road to the top of the embankment and manipulated until it lay horizontal, with its base resting upon the sand with which the funnel had been filled. The sand was now removed in baskets by way of the galleries, and as the level of sand sank inside the funnel so the base of the obelisk sank too, until it rested at last upon its plinth at the bottom. Finally, the embankment was demolished and the obelisk left standing alone.

The great columned halls and pylon-towers of temples were erected by methods equally sure and equally laborious. The drums of the columns would be hauled up a sloping ramp, the angle of which needed continual alteration, until finally the work was finished and the ramp could be removed. Methods such as these must have prolonged the work over years, but continual practice in carrying out such gigantic tasks and in the handling of

men and materials rendered Egyptian architects supreme masters of their art. Perhaps the most impressive witness to their powers is the temple of Rameses II at Abu Simbel in Nubia, hewn out of a solid cliff of sandstone and fronted by four colossal statues of Rameses himself, each sixty-five feet in height and carved out of the living rock.<sup>1</sup>

So far the reader has been introduced to the workmen of ancient Egypt only in a general way, more attention being paid to the work on which they were employed than to the people themselves. In the following pages, therefore, I will try to paint a picture of their life.

The Egyptian workmen about whom we have the most information were those employed in connection with the Necropolis on the west bank of Thebes, for this district, owing to Egyptian beliefs concerning life after death, became during the New Kingdom a hive of industry. The preparation of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, great galleries extending for hundreds of feet into the rock and adorned with coloured reliefs and inscriptions, the cutting of the hundreds of private tombs which honeycomb the cliffs, and the manufacture of funerary furniture as well as the embalming of the dead, all these occupations called for a permanent colony of workmen whose lives should be devoted to nothing else. And so the "Great and Noble Necropolis of millions

<sup>1</sup> The reader may see in the British Museum a cast, actual size, of the face of one of these statues.

of years of Pharaoh on the west of Thebes" became a separate district of the capital city, under a high official who was responsible for the administration of it. The Necropolis was further divided into parts bearing special names—for example, the "Place of Truth"—the whole district being enclosed by five walls, and defended by a military stronghold called "Fortress of the Necropolis."

The workers were divided into two main sections, called the Right and the Left Side respectively. Each of these two sides was placed under the charge of a chief workman, and had attached to it a scribe who kept the records and accounts. The workmen themselves were of the various professions required by the Necropolis industries, and included sculptors, engravers, quarrymen, coppersmiths, woodworkers, plastermakers and others. In addition to these people the district possessed a staff of police consisting of Nubians, of a tribe called the Mazoi, commanded by two chief officers. These police were responsible, of course, for the peace of the district, but more especially for the preservation of the tombs from spoliation. As we shall see later on they were kept busy.

About the life of the workmen themselves an astonishing amount of information has been handed down to us in the form of legal records, registers etc., written on papyrus and limestone flakes. From these we learn that the workmen were employed by the State, and apparently did not receive payment of any kind but were merely provided with

rations. These were issued by Pharaoh through his chief minister, the Vizier, and consisted of grain from the State granaries, fish and vegetables; they were also provided with oil and clothing. When the administration grew lax these supplies were often not forthcoming, with the result that the starving workmen used to strike and make a hunger march to the offices of the authorities in order to protest. "There are no clothes, no oil, no fish, no vegetables," they would say. "Send to Pharaoh our Good Lord concerning them, and send also to the Vizier our master that a means of sustenance may be provided for us."<sup>1</sup> During the Twentieth Dynasty things were in such a bad state that incidents of this sort were constantly repeated, so that the men were often too hungry or too weak to work. In the more stable days of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties, however, we may assume that their lot was happier.

The most arduous form of work on which these men were engaged was undoubtedly the cutting and decoration of the rock tombs, especially the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. As the visitor stands in the great hypogeum of Seti I the thought of the immense amount of labour expended upon it may well appal and weigh him down. This particular tomb extends for 330 feet into the solid rock, through corridors and galleries the walls of which are covered with painted reliefs and inscrip-

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Prof. T. E. Peet in *The Great Tomb-robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty*, (Clarendon Press) p. 13.

tions. After passing representations of the king in presence of the gods, other religious scenes and columns of religious texts, we finally emerge into a hall where the ceiling is bright with the goddess Nūt and the stars of Heaven. Surely we may wonder how the ancients could work so far removed from the light of day in the eternal darkness of the rock, with only very unsatisfactory methods of illumination.

The actual cutting out of the great galleries, the preparation of the walls for the artist, the drawing of the religious scenes in outline with masterly skill, the carving and painting which followed, all this was done by the light of oil lamps. It has been suggested that a number of large mirrors was employed, by which the sunlight could be reflected from outside into the tomb, being passed on from mirror to mirror. This, however, seems very improbable, for ancient mirrors were made of bronze or copper, and these materials could only have given a poor result, while even that would soon be diminished after repeated reflections. Moreover, the course of the light would have been blocked by scaffolding and by the workmen themselves. It is probable, on the contrary, that a very large number of lamps was used, each consisting of a small open vessel filled with oil in which a wick floated. Even then the light provided must have been very poor, although it is a well-known fact that Eastern craftsmen to-day are capable of doing delicate work in a very dim light, as for instance in the gold

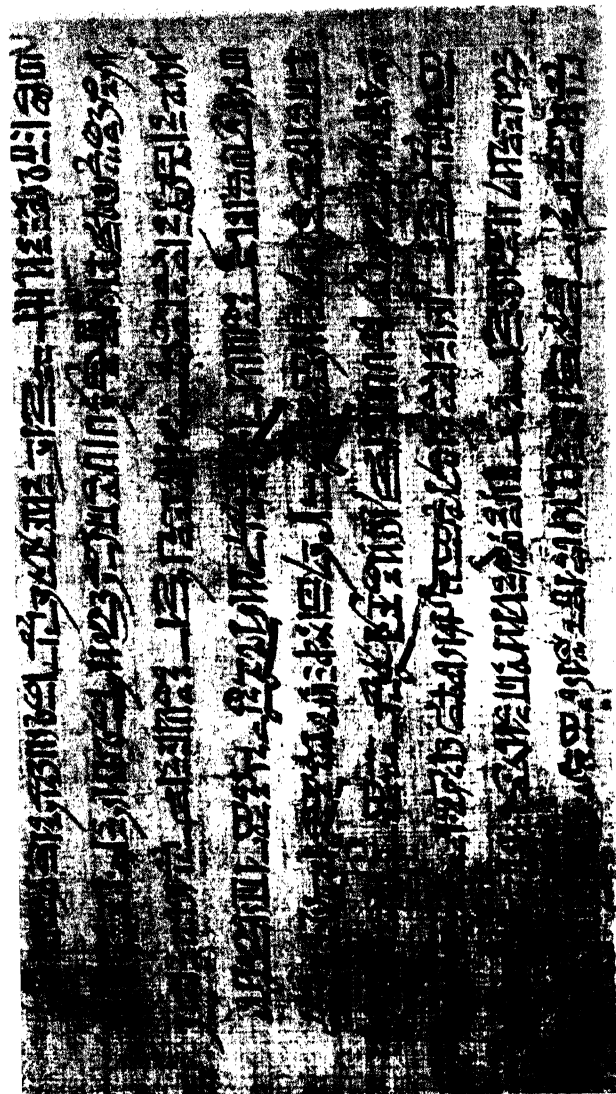


Figure 6

A PAGE OF PAPYRUS D'ORBINEY. *British Museum No. 10183.*

Which contains the Tale of the Two Brothers, and is written in Hieratic. Underneath is a transcription into



SCRIBES' PALETTES AND PENS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM  
For a translation of the inscriptions on No. 5512 (right-hand example)  
see page 87.

bazaar at Cairo. Yet a life spent under such trying conditions must have often resulted in suffering. Several of the tablets mentioned on pages 75-6, which were set up by necropolis workmen, inscribed with addresses to divinities whom they had offended, state that the suppliant "beholds darkness by day" or "a darkness of thy (the deity's) making." It seems probable that these are expressions for blindness, and that the tombs had succeeded in robbing the men of their eyesight.

The British Museum possesses a papyrus actually containing a register of householders of the district, entitled "Town-register of the West of No<sup>1</sup> from the temple of King Menmarē to the Settlement of Maiunehes." The interest of this document is naturally very great, although it gives no idea of the total population. Only 182 houses are mentioned, and, according to the title of the register, this represents the number of dwellings between the temple of Seti I at Kurna in the north and the "Settlement of Maiunehes" in the south, which probably lay at or near the modern Deir-el-Medinah. But we have no means of estimating the number of persons normally living in a single house, nor yet the much larger numbers inhabiting the buildings attached to the funerary temples.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, although we may assume that the occupations of the various people mentioned

<sup>1</sup> Thebes.

<sup>2</sup> During the Twentieth Dynasty the temple of Rameses III at Medinet Habu seems to have been the centre from which the west bank of Thebes was administered.



were in some way connected with the necropolis, only one person, a scribe, is expressly mentioned as being a member of the necropolis staff. This suggests that the necropolis workers were housed in some specially enclosed area, and not scattered about like the householders of the register.

The professions of these householders are very various. Forty-nine were priests, mostly of the lowest grade (*uā'b*). Seven were administrative officials, one of these being the Prince of the West himself, and thirteen were scribes. The remaining householders included a doctor, seven policemen and two police-officers, seven gardeners, eighteen herdsmen, six land-workers, six washermen, twelve fishermen, three bee-keepers, four brewers, eight sandal-makers, two incense-roasters, and others.

Most of the information which has come down to us about the working classes of ancient Egypt is concerned with lawsuits. We thus know more of their crimes than of their virtues, and some of the cases recorded are extremely amusing. Besides the ordinary settlements in a court of law disputes were often decided, during the latter part of the New Kingdom, by recourse to oracles. The case was presented before the image of a god, and the latter signified his wishes by nodding his movable head, worked no doubt by an inspired priest! A favourite deity with the Necropolis workmen was Amenhotep I, the second Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who, together with his mother, Queen Nefertari, had been canonised as

patron deities of Western Thebes, the land of the dead. In fact, so closely were they associated with the dead god Osiris that in art they were depicted as having skins of the blue-black colour characteristic of that god. Elsewhere in Thebes, as may be readily understood, the god Amon-Rē' was regarded as arbitrator, petitions being often presented to some local form of this deity. One of the most interesting and entertaining cases of this sort which has been preserved is to be found on a papyrus in the British Museum. The events described are as follows:

A servant called Amenemuia was keeper of a storehouse belonging to the temple of "Amon of Pa-Khenty," Pa-Khenty being a locality in Thebes, and five tunics of coloured cloth, for which he was responsible, had been stolen from him. When, therefore, the image of the god was being carried abroad in procession during the annual festival of Opet, Amenemuia appeared and addressed the god, recounting the story of his loss: ". . . men came unto me at noon and stole five tunics of coloured cloth from me. My good and beloved lord, wilt thou give me back their theft?"<sup>1</sup> Whereupon, so the text tells us, "the god nodded very greatly." Then Amenemuia proceeded to read out to the god a list of the names of all the people of the township, and when the name of a certain farmer called Pathauemdiamon was mentioned the god nodded again, and said

<sup>1</sup> This and the following passages are quoted from the translation by Dr. A. M. Blackman in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. XI, pp. 250 ff.

aloud: "It is he who stole them." Pathauemdiamon, however, who was present at the time, waxed very indignant and did not hesitate to contradict the god flatly, alleging that his accusation was false. At this the god, as might have been expected, became angry too.

But Pathauemdiamon remained unmoved, even going so far as to insinuate that the local form of Amon worshipped near his home would be more likely to tell the truth, and to this deity, Amon of Ta-Shenyt, he went off immediately. But even his own god refused to take his part, nodding at him and saying: "It is he who took them," and when Pathauemdiamon denied the charge replied: "Take him before Amon of Bukenen in the presence of many witnesses." Thereupon, accompanied by the representative of the overseer of the cattle belonging to the temple of Rameses III, the chief craftsman and a herdsman of the temple as witnesses, the accused man was taken before a third local form of Amon. What happened at this enquiry we do not know, for the document passes on to describe a further hearing,<sup>1</sup> this time before Amon of Pa-Khenty again. On this occasion Pathauemdiamon was finally convicted, being accused once more by the god. The text goes on to tell us that Amon of Pa-Khenty then "took him and inflicted chastisement on him in the presence of the townsmen," and forced him to swear an oath that he was the

<sup>1</sup> Actually this is described as the third hearing before Amon of Pa-Khenty, so there must have been yet another which is not reported in our document.

guilty party and that he would return the clothes. This presumably means that the priests of Amon gave him a good beating, after which he acknowledged his crime. Even then the unfortunate Pathauem-diamon was not finished with; a local official inflicted on him a hundred blows of the palm-rib, and again made him pronounce an oath saying: "If I go back again on what I have said, I will be thrown to the crocodile!" Finally, to prevent any subtleties on the part of the defendant, the plaintiff, Amenemuia, was ordered to swear an oath that he had not yet received back the clothes.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GREAT CRIMINALS

LATE one evening a party of eight Necropolis workers was sitting in a circle upon the floor of a mud hut. The wooden door had been shut and fastened securely, and an atmosphere of great secrecy brooded over the assembly. These men had a half-starved appearance which was much accentuated by the scantiness of their clothing, the latter consisting only of a loin-cloth.

A tall and hungry-looking man was speaking, and the others followed his words with close attention. "It is quite safe," he said, "and to-night is the best time for the attempt. There will be little moon, so it will be all the easier to find our way to the tomb unseen. Besides, I have arranged matters so that the Necropolis guards will not be on duty to-night."

"That was cleverly managed, Hāpi-ur," said another man. "How did you do it?"

"It was quite simple," replied the first speaker. "I bribed that miserable scribe of our section to write an anonymous note at my dictation, saying that the writer had received information that an attempt was going to be made on a tomb in the

Valley to-night by a large body of men. I then sent the note to the Chief of Police, and if that has not resulted in most of the guards being sent to the Valley on a false scent may I be deemed a fool for the rest of my days!"

The reader will have gathered by now that these workmen were engaged in hatching a plot of some kind, and we are forced to acknowledge that this was so, and, further, that it was a plot of the most villainous nature. They were planning to rob one of the tombs, a crime so terrible in the eyes of pious Egyptians that it was rewarded with death. The crime, however, was at this time of frequent occurrence, for during the period of the Twentieth Dynasty affairs were by no means satisfactory in "The Great and Noble Necropolis of Millions of Years of Pharaoh on the West of Thebes."

Harassed as Egypt was by a series of great wars with the Libyans and peoples of the sea, disturbed by the constant infiltration of Libyan immigrants, and faced with increasing political difficulties owing to the waning power of the throne and the rapidly growing influence of the High Priests of Amon-Rē', it is not surprising that at home the administrative authorities were unable to maintain order. Especially was this the case in the Necropolis. The workmen were not paid regularly and were often in a starving condition. Discipline had been relaxed and petty officials were not slow to take advantage of the situation. Certain among the large staff of

people living on the western bank of Thebes who were employed in connection with the eternal dwellings of the dead had begun to turn their eyes towards the wealth lying ready to hand. In the shafts of countless tombs the dead had been buried with magnificent regalia, Pharaohs, princes and nobles adorned with gold and precious stones and surrounded by the richest funeral furniture. While the living starved the dead enjoyed useless affluence, and at last the living laid violent hands upon the holy departed.

On the occasion of which we are speaking the conspirators stole forth at midnight beneath a crescent moon, each man taking a different route to the appointed place. The eight men represented various professions followed in Western Thebes. There were Hāpi-ur, a quarryman, the stone-cutter Hāpiā'o, two carpenters called Setekhnekhth and Iren-amon, Amenemheb a field-labourer, Kaemuas a water-carrier, and two others. The goal of their nefarious expedition was one of the small pyramid-tombs of an earlier age, in this case of King Sekhem-Rē'-shed-tauī, Son of Rē', Sebekemsaf. Like the other kings of his period (the Seventeenth Dynasty, about 1700-1580 B.C.) he had been buried in an unpretentious tomb, consisting of chambers excavated in the rocky cliff beneath a pyramidal superstructure of crude brick.

It is naturally not to be supposed that an entrance could be forced into such a sepulchre in the course of one night. The thieves in whose movements we



WOODEN WRITING-BOARD INSCRIBED WITH A SCHOOL-EXERCISE, CONSISTING OF A LIST OF NAMES OF KEFTIANS  
(CRETANS); XVIIIth DYNASTY [*British Museum No. 5047*]



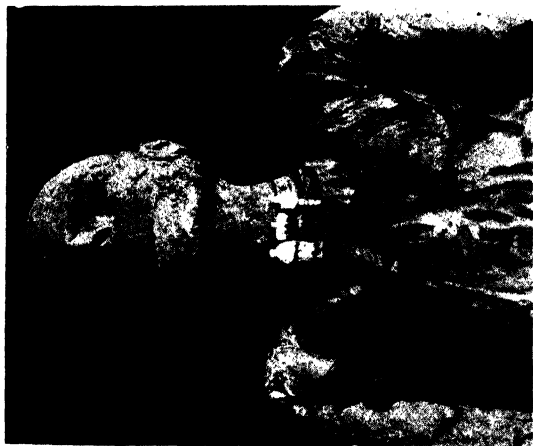


Fig. 2  
MUMMY OF A PRIEST OF AMON (XXIst  
DYNASTY) SHOWING AMULETS FASTENED TO  
NECK

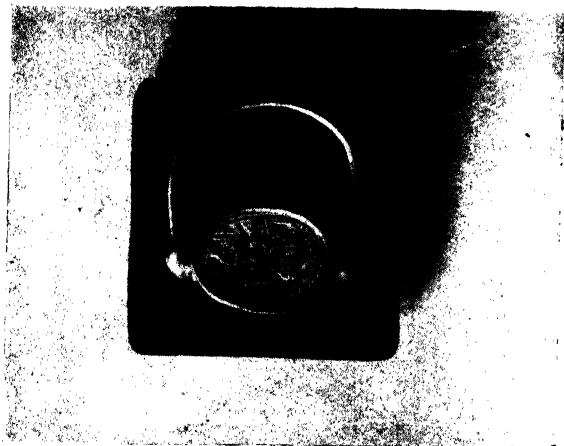


Fig. 1  
SCARAB-RING OF PTAHMOSE, HIGH-PRIEST  
OF PTAH IN THE REIGN OF AMENHOTEP III,  
(XVIIIth DYNASTY) *British Museum No.*  
2930

are interested had been at work for many days previously, whenever that part of the Necropolis had been deserted for any length of time by day or night. Near to the pyramid of King Sebekemsaf was a tomb hewn in the rocky cliff, made for a private person called Nebamon, and this tomb provided the most convenient scene for the operations. Superintended by the quarryman Hāpi-ur and the stone cutter Hāpiā'o various members of the band had laboriously cut a tunnel through the wall of this rock tomb into the neighbouring pyramid. Not only was this the easiest means of gaining entrance to the tomb of Sebekemsaf but it was also far the safest, for they could work away at their tunnel in the seclusion of Nebamon's tomb, hidden from the sight of any passer-by. Now all was ready for the robbery, and a single night would suffice for the searching of the pyramid-tomb and the removal of the treasures to be found in it.

By this time the party, having made its way thither by many and devious paths, had assembled in the outer hall of Nebamon's tomb. Enjoining his comrades to keep complete silence Hāpi-ur took three torches from a corner of the hall and handed two to one of the men. The remaining torch he lit and proceeded to pick up a number of leather bags, also concealed in the same corner. These he distributed among the men, and next, holding the torch before him, began to crawl along the tunnel which gaped in the middle of a beautifully sculptured

and painted scene on the wall of Nebamon's tomb, ruthlessly smashed by the robbers. After crawling on hands and knees for about five minutes Hāpi-ur emerged into the king's chamber of Sebekemsaf's tomb, where the pitch darkness was dispelled by the flare of his torch. As soon as the others had made their way into the chamber, Kaemuas alone being left in the tomb of Nebamon to keep watch, the remaining two torches were lighted from that carried by Hāpi-ur and the robbers stood still and looked about them.

In this room, where the heat was almost stifling, King Sebekemsaf lay entombed. A large sarcophagus had been hewn out of the living rock within the chamber but had not been separated from its bed. The massive stone lid had already been moved to one side on the previous day. Inside this stone coffin lay the beautiful inner coffin of wood overlaid with gold (Plate xxxiii). This overlay was chased with an elaborate feather design, and a prayer inscribed in hieroglyphs extended down the front; the face of the coffin was intended to be a portrait of the dead king, and the eyes were inlaid with black obsidian and white alabaster. He was represented as wearing the striped head-cloth of Pharaoh, from the front of which the royal cobra reared its head.

As they gazed on this solemn house of death several of the robbers began to tremble with fear, remembering the grim curses which were always invoked by the owner of a tomb upon any person

who should desecrate it. One example of such a curse runs as follows:

"As for anyone who trespasses on my abode, who shall damage my tomb-chamber, or who shall drag out my corpse, the *kā* of Rē' shall loathe him, he shall not bequeath his property to his children, his heart shall not be satisfied in life, he shall not receive water in the Necropolis, his soul shall be destroyed for ever."

The survival of a man or woman in the next world depended largely on the preservation of the mortal body after death. If the latter were destroyed then extinction was inevitable. Hence the horror with which pious Egyptians regarded the crime of tomb-robbery. Even these robbers who now, in the burial chamber of the Pharaoh Sebekemsaf, were proposing to do the unspeakable deed, were fully aware of the awfulness of their intentions, and began to mutter protective spells, or to pray to Osiris and Anubis for pardon. Indeed it is possible that, had not Hāpi-ur, their leader, been of stronger stuff, they would have turned and fled. The quarryman, however, rallied his companions with whispered taunts and threats until they had regained their courage and could proceed to business.

Once they had made a beginning the robbers lost little time. The lid of the wooden coffin was forced away and the mummy dragged from its place. The head was covered with a splendid *cartonnage* mask overlaid with gold, and this was at once removed and the gold leaf pulled off. The shroud in which the mummy had been sewn up was next

slit with a knife, exposing the bandaged corpse beneath. These bandages were then unrolled as quickly as possible, and prize after prize snatched by greedy hands. Amulets overlaid with gold, representing the Eye of Horus, were fastened at his neck, and the whole mummy was richly adorned with gold. Last of all the body itself was laid bare, a brown shrivelled object, which was soon torn into fragments by the robbers in their eagerness to wrench away the golden bangles inlaid with precious stones which had been fastened around the arms and legs, and the beautiful scarab-rings encircling the dead king's fingers.

Meanwhile those men who were not engaged in plundering the mummy were busy in cutting away the gold, silver and precious stones with which the inner coffin was adorned. At length all was finished, and the spoil which had been obtained was packed into leather bags brought for the purpose, including the smaller articles of tomb-furniture which lay about the room and which were of any value. Last of all the wooden coffin, now stripped of its precious ornamentation, was split into pieces and heaped in the middle of the room, together with the pitiful fragments of the mummy and its mass of linen bandages. Hāpi-ur then thrust a torch underneath the pile, which soon caught fire, and without more ado led the way back through the tunnel into the rock-tomb of Nebamon. Behind him King Sebekemsaf's provision for immortality went up in flame and smoke.

"All has been quiet!" whispered Kaemuas, the man who had been left on guard in the tomb of Nebamon, "No one has been near."

"Good!" replied Hāpi-ur. "Let us return as we came—by different paths. To-morrow night, if all is well, we will take the gold from the queen's chamber." And so saying he vanished into the darkness.

On the following night the same men assembled near the tomb, the Necropolis guards being still, apparently, concentrated at the Valley of the Kings owing to Hāpi-ur's anonymous letter. The tomb-chamber of Queen Nubkhās, wife of Sebekemsaf, adjoined that of her lord, but it had been necessary to force an entrance into it from a different direction. The same process of desecration and plunder as on the previous night took place, after which the robbers returned safely to the hut which they used as a meeting place, and, emptying the total spoil out of the leather bags, began to divide it into eight equal parts.

. . . . .

They had almost finished, and dawn was showing above the hills, when a murmur of voices was heard outside the hut. The robbers started to their feet in alarm, but before they had time to conceal their booty the door was battered down by lusty blows from without and twelve dark-skinned Mazoi policemen rushed into the hut. Three or four of the robbers escaped through the open door, but were at once arrested by other police who had drawn

a cordon around the hut, while those remaining within were soon overpowered and fettered. The Chief of Police had not proved to be so simple as Hāpi-ur had thought, and had failed to be entirely misled by the false scent prepared for him. Although he had drawn off the majority of his men to watch the Valley of the Kings he had, on the second day, given special orders that a small body should do a round of the whole Necropolis in the course of the night. These men had espied the thieves leaving the tomb of Nebamon after the completion of their robbery, and had hastened to headquarters with the information in time for arrests to be effected.

As soon as the eight criminals had been fettered hand and foot with cord and roped together, the police marched them away, accompanied by their wives, children and relations, all of whom had also been arrested by the police in the neighbouring village, a yelling and gesticulating mob. For the ancient Egyptian police were nothing if not thorough, and believed in making sure of everybody who might be connected even remotely with the case. By the time that Rē' had appeared above the mountain of sunrise one and all were safely under lock and key within the precinct of the temple of Rameses III. Later their names and the charges against them were set down in writing and despatched to the Vizier.

In ancient Egypt the Vizier had always been at the head of the administration of justice, and the conduct of the most important trials was generally

supervised by him personally. The existence of permanent courts at the time of which we are speaking is not certain, but it seems that in the case of tomb-robberies the matter was regarded as so serious that special courts of investigation were commissioned by Pharaoh himself. It was usual to report such crimes immediately to the Vizier, if he happened to be in Upper Egypt, or, if he was not, for the police and other officials to sail downstream with their documents to wherever he might be. Just now the Vizier, together with other high officers of the state, happened to be residing in Thebes, in order to investigate thoroughly the very disgraceful condition in which the whole Necropolis found itself.

Accordingly, after the lapse of some days, the prisoners were brought before the court, which sat in the great temple of Amon at Karnak. This court consisted of four judges, the Vizier Khāemuas, who represented the king's person, the royal butler Nesamon, Pesiur, Prince of Thebes, and a herald. Each judge wore round his neck a small gold statuette of Maāt, suspended by a gold chain. Maāt was the goddess of Truth, and so was regarded as the patron deity of justice, all judges of high rank being her priests.

The first prisoner to be examined was Hāpi-ur, the ringleader. As he stood before the stern-faced judges the accusation against him was read aloud by a scribe, and he was then ordered to declare, on oath, whether or no it was true. In an Egyptian



trial there was neither jury nor advocate, and the accused persons had always to defend themselves. Hāpi-ur, therefore, swore by the life of Pharaoh that he and his companions had not committed the crime. No sooner had the words left his mouth than the Vizier lifted his finger and two burly men, who had been standing in attendance, leapt upon the prisoner and bore him to the ground, where he was held face downwards while two other men began to beat him mercilessly with palm-ribs. After this had continued for a few minutes Hāpi-ur's courage began to break down. "Stop, I will tell!" he cried, and at once the beating ceased and he confessed that he had "stolen something" from the tomb of Sebekemsaf. More than this he did not acknowledge, hoping that it would be considered sufficient.

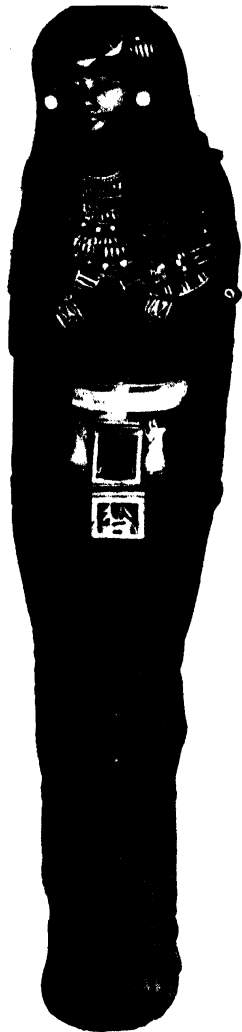
But the authorities knew the people with whom they had to deal, and their methods were indeed effective, if cruel. A kind of birch-rod was now brought in, and the victim thrashed with this until again he besought them to stop, and added some more details to his former confession. This time he acknowledged quite a lot, but not all yet. He admitted the wholesale plundering of the tomb, but loyally attempted to conceal the names of his accomplices. All was to no purpose, however; the police proceeded to the third and most cruel form of the question. An instrument made of wood,<sup>1</sup> elliptical in shape, was brought in, and the

<sup>1</sup> The arms of foreign prisoners captured in war are often shown confined in a similar instrument.



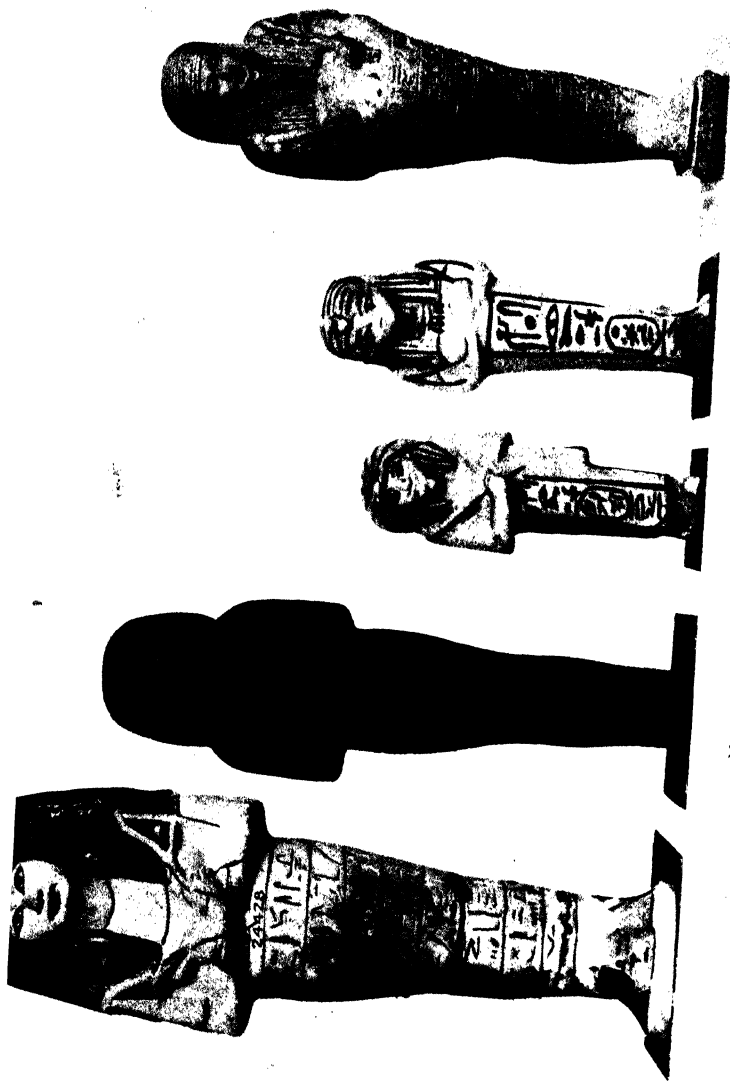
*Fig. 1*

GILDED INNER COFFIN OF THE LADY HENTNEHYT, NINTH DYNASTY  
*British Museum No. 480011. For description see pages 111-112.*



*Fig. 2*

MUMMY OF KATEBET, A MUSICIAN-PRIESTESS OF AMON-RÉ AT THEBES. Note the cartonnage head-piece with gilded face, and the wooden hands which wear real rings of carnelian and other materials. Below are



*Ushabti*.—FIGURES OF DIFFERENT PERIODS  
two figures of King Paynezem II (glazed faience, XVIIIth Dynasty); Huy, an official (wood, XIXth Dynasty);  
glazed faience, NNVth Dynasty) [British Museum Nos. 24428, 34134, 30001, 34178, 34180.] (See pages 170-7)

prisoner's right foot passed through it. The instrument was then twisted round brutally until Hāpi-ur's joints began to crack. The extreme pain of the torture broke down his last attempts at resistance, and, by the time that his wrists as well as his feet had been wrenched about in this way, a full acknowledgment of his guilt and that of his comrades had been drawn from him.

One by one the seven accomplices were examined in the same manner, in order to see whether their confessions agreed with that of Hāpi-ur, and the large crowd of witnesses who had been arrested at the same time were also closely questioned with beatings. The majority of the latter, however, were soon discharged. A day or two later the thieves, accompanied by the Vizier Khaemuas and the butler Nesamon, were conveyed over the river to the Necropolis where they were forced to point out to their judges the actual scene of the crime.

The accusation was now considered to have been fully proved, and sentence of death was passed upon them. The conviction and sentence were then, by order of the judges, set down in writing and forwarded to Pharaoh for his confirmation, power over life and death belonging to him alone. In the meantime the thieves were imprisoned in the keep of the temple of Amon at Karnak. One of them, Setekhnekht the carpenter, who succeeded in breaking loose, was found and brought back some days later.

At length, after the lapse of three weeks, for Pharaoh did not happen to be in Thebes, the warrant bearing the royal signature was brought back by messenger, and in due course the day of the execution arrived. It was a harrowing spectacle. Ordinary crimes might be punished with beheading or some such rapid form of death, but destruction of the dead was met with a far more terrible doom. Those who had robbed the Good God Sebekemsaf, one of the divine ancestors of the living Pharaoh, and his queen of their hopes of immortality must pay for their wickedness to the full. The execution-ground consisted of a piece of waste land outside the city of Thebes, and to it, in the blazing heat of midday, the eight thieves were led, bound to one another with ropes. They were accompanied on this, their last journey, by their wives and children, who filled the air with piteous lamentations. On the execution-ground lay eight thin wooden stakes, of which the ends had been sharpened to a point, and beside each stake a hole had been sunk in the ground. As the ringleader of the robbers it was Hāpi-ur who was executed first, and it was a sight from which many turned away in horror. The victim was firmly held by four men, two grasping his arms and two his legs. Two others, regardless of his screams, then forced the pointed end of a stake through his body, after which the stake was set up in its hole in the ground leaving Hāpi-ur transfixed upon it. In the same manner his accomplices were treated, until eight stakes stood beneath the burning sun

with eight struggling human beings upon them. Over their lingering death we will draw a veil, and turn to consider other things.

. . . . .

In the "Great and Noble Necropolis of Millions of Years" matters steadily went from bad to worse. Under the priest-kings of the Twenty-first Dynasty further efforts were probably made to keep a check upon the tomb-robberies, but one may doubt if with much success. The pious priests, however, who had seized the throne of Egypt were resolved to do what they could to remedy the sacrilege. When it was found that a royal tomb had been broken into and robbed, and the mummy of the owner damaged, they had the latter carefully repaired and re-banded, and placed inside its own or a fresh coffin with a note written in ink upon it recording the facts. The mummy was then moved, with any of the funeral furniture that had survived, in the greatest secrecy to some other tomb which had so far escaped the notice of robbers.

Such was the inglorious fate of the great Pharaohs of the Empire! Their own tombs, prepared at so great labour and expense, being rudely desecrated, their bodies were hurried from hiding-place to hiding-place in order to escape complete destruction. At last the royal mummies were concentrated into two tombs, that of Amenhotep II in the Valley of the Kings and another at Deir-el-Bahri, where, in

these their last resting-places, they slept unmolested for three thousand years until, at the end of the last century, they were discovered and again moved, but this time it was to the exhibition cases of the Bulaq Museum.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TREASURES OF THE PAST

AN account of the ancient Egyptians and their life and customs would be incomplete without some mention of the small objects of art or utility which they made in such large quantities, and which reveal to us very intimately their ideas and capabilities. The highly organised excavations of to-day provide a ceaseless flow of objects to the museums of the world, and it would be useful to consider first the manner in which such excavations are conducted.

The methods used vary considerably according to the nature of the site which is being explored; it may be a stone temple of which the foundations only are preserved, or a rock-tomb the entrance of which has to be found to begin with, or a cemetery containing hundreds of graves. But whatever site is chosen the investigation must proceed on strictly scientific lines if the fullest amount of information possible is to be obtained. The early days of expeditions, in which the discoverers only kept what was attractive and threw away what they considered to be rubbish, are gone for ever. Romance is still to be found in excavation, but the person who takes up the work having only



read of it in novels and expecting it to be one long holiday will find himself rudely awakened. For hard work it certainly is, and often exceedingly monotonous, needing unflagging energy and loyal concentration on the smallest details. The reward, however, is considered ample if afterwards it is possible to add only a few more touches to the picture of Egyptian civilisation.

As an example let us take the exploration of Tell-el-'Amarneh, where the only complete Egyptian city has been preserved down to the present day. Owing to the fact that Egyptian private houses and all buildings other than religious were built of sun-dried mud brick they have not survived, for when a house fell into decay the remains were simply levelled and another house erected on the top. In this way city after city was built upon the ruins of its predecessors instead of standing, like the stone temples, throughout the ages. At El-'Amarneh, however, special circumstances permitted an entire city, and that the capital of Egypt, to remain almost untouched until our time.

In the synopsis of Egyptian history at the beginning of this book I have spoken of the Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, better known as Akhenaten, who endeavoured to introduce the worship of the sun's disc as the one sole god, at the same time proscribing the remaining members of the Egyptian pantheon. In order to cut adrift once for all from the associations of the past he decided to abandon Thebes, the city of the god Amon-Rē' and the

capital of Egypt, and to build an entirely new capital city elsewhere. The site which he chose was the district known to-day to Europeans as Tell-el-'Amarneh, situated 250 miles north of Thebes, where the cliffs on the east bank of the river recede leaving a bay of desert bordered by a strip of green cultivation (Plate xxxiv, fig. 1). Here he built his city, "The Horizon-of-the-Disc," and here he celebrated gorgeous festivals in honour of his god while the Egyptian empire in Asia was in danger. After the death of Akhenaten, his successors, being either unable or unwilling to prolong the struggle against the ancient gods, gave up the new religion and moved back to Thebes. In a few years' time the "Horizon-of-the-Disc" was completely deserted, and the houses, palaces, temples and other public buildings were left to become gradually covered by the desert sand.

It is this ruined city which has provided most of our knowledge of the secular buildings of ancient Egypt. The description of the house of Nesamon given in Chapter II is based entirely upon discoveries made at El-'Amarneh, but, although that description occupies only a few pages in the telling, years of patient investigation lie behind it. In the season of 1891-2 Sir Flinders Petrie conducted the first systematic excavation at El-'Amarneh. During the years before the War a German expedition dug out a further portion of the city, finding, among other things of great interest, the sculptor's workshop containing the celebrated portrait-busts of

Queen Nefertiti and the royal family now in the Berlin Museum. After the War the concession was obtained by the British, and the Egypt Exploration Society has, since 1919, year by year continued to lay bare the capital of the heretic king, providing as a result of each expedition an increasing amount of information concerning the everyday life of the ancient Egyptians (Plate xxxiv, fig. 2).

The walls of the ruined houses of El-'Amarneh are often preserved up to a considerable height (see Plate xxxv, fig. 1), and even where this is not the case there is little difficulty in recovering the ground-plan. It is necessary, therefore, that the expedition should include a competent architect, whose duty is to record the plan of every building in full detail as it is excavated, and to incorporate it in large plans of the various districts of the city. The actual work of digging is performed by a number of trained *fellahin* supplemented by volunteers from the neighbouring villages, but one or more members of the European staff must always be on duty to supervise operations and to take full notes of all points of interest. Every night a card-catalogue is made of all objects found during the day, each of which is given a serial number. All the pottery found in the houses, also the beads and pendants, are studied and compared with the *corpus* of types already known. If any new types are found they have to be drawn to scale. In addition to this the inscribed material must be copied and studied by somebody with an efficient knowledge of the language.





Very often important pieces of evidence at El-'Amarneh are preserved in a most fragile condition, and exceedingly careful handling is required if they are not to be lost altogether. For example, the evidence which enabled archæologists to recover the decoration of an Egyptian ceiling described on pages 46-7 was as follows: When a house passed into a state of decay the ceilings collapsed, the wooden beams falling on to the floors of the rooms. In course of time the wood naturally decayed, but the painted mud casings remained and were soon covered up with sand. When, therefore, a house is being dug out the closest watch has to be kept for traces of paint on the floors, and, as soon as any is noticed, a specially trained workman is instructed to clean the floor and remove the sand with a brush. Then, if due care has been observed, fragments of the mud casings of the beams will be revealed, with the patterns in bright colours still preserved upon them. Plate xxxv, fig. 1 shows the central room of a house where such fragments have been found, and fig. 2 is a closer view of the floor showing the actual fragments in place. Again, when a few beads are found the archæologist is summoned at once. It may be a necklace or bead-collar of which the string has long since rotted to nothing, and, if he blows away the sand very gently, he may find the beads still lying in their original order. If he then enters this in his notebook he will be able to restring the beads exactly as they were worn in ancient times. The

bead-collar reproduced on Plate XIV, fig. 2 was re-strung in this way.

Of all the many kinds of objects manufactured by ancient people to the excavator pottery is perhaps the most important. Pots and pans, things made and used in large quantities, are to be found wherever the remains of ancient civilisations are dug up. If the archæologist is well grounded in the various styles of pottery used in the different historical periods, he will be able to tell at once the date of the site which he is excavating. At a place like El-'Amarneh, a city which was inhabited for a lifetime by a large number of people, the amount of pots and fragments of pots which are found in the houses is enormous, and the task of examining and "typing" them is a strenuous one, as the writer knows from personal experience, having had that task during the expedition of 1929. Egyptian pottery, however, can be very interesting, and, at its best, very artistic.

During the Predynastic Period (before 3300 B.C.) the potter's wheel had not yet been invented, but the potters were nevertheless able to turn out highly finished products. The most beautiful predynastic pots are the polished ones, either black or red, or red with a black rim. Not so beautiful but much more interesting are the buff-coloured pots decorated with drawings in red of men and animals, and of boats sailing on the Nile or being rowed by many oars. More marvellous still are the stone vases of the predynastic period, worked only

with the aid of wood or stone borers fed with powdered corundum or emery. The culminating triumph of this workmanship is a vase found at Hieraconpolis made of black and white syenite. It is sixteen inches high, and measures two feet across, but it is so thin that it can be lifted by one finger, whereas if solid it would weigh four hundred pounds.

The potter's wheel was introduced by the time of the Fourth Dynasty, and with its introduction Egyptian pottery began to decline, while the beauty of the stone vases grew greater still. Few things can be found more lovely than the alabaster vessels of the Old Kingdom, especially if placed so that sunlight streams through them. Except for the deep red polished ware of the Fourth—Sixth Dynasties Egyptian pottery does not become really attractive again until the New Kingdom, when a style with painted decoration becomes frequent. The reddish cups and vessels of the Eighteenth Dynasty, embellished with rows of bright blue lotus petals, or the jars with coloured modelling in the form of animals or the head of the goddess Hathor, seem exactly suited to banquet and festivity. Later in the New Kingdom, however, pottery began to degenerate once more, and became increasingly coarse as time went on.

The art, however, in which the Egyptians excelled was that of glazing, and this compensates for their lack of success with pottery during historic times. Before the First Dynasty they had discovered how to apply glaze to stone, and had also evolved the



technique, for which they afterwards became famous, of glazing objects made of composition. This composition is often referred to as "faïence," and consists of a body-material of a siliceous-sandy nature held together by mucilage or gum of some sort, which is then coated with a coloured glaze. The most beautiful of Egyptian glazes is the blue, and that colour, together with green, is the most frequently met with. The Egyptians delighted in this art, whether they were planning a room the walls of which were to be covered with tiles of blue faïence, as in the Pyramid and tomb of King Zoser at Sakkara, or designing beads and pendants of the same material in the form of fruit and flowers, like those from El-'Amarneh, or glazing scarabs exquisitely carved out of steatite.

The glazed objects, however, which, apart from beads, have come down to us in the greatest numbers from ancient Egypt are scarabs and *ushabti*-figures. The scarab is a model of the sacred beetle—*scarabaeus sacer*—made of stone or composition and then glazed. It developed first for use as a seal at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom (about 2000 B.C.), taking the place of the button-seal which had been employed during the latter part of the Old Kingdom and during the First Intermediate Period, and of the cylinder seal. The latter, consisting of a stone or composition cylinder on which the required design had been cut, and which was then simply rolled over the soft mud sealing, was very popular during the earlier part of Egyptian history, and

always remained so in Babylonia and Assyria, but it had practically died out in Egypt by the Twelfth Dynasty. The scarab, on the other hand, was produced in increasing numbers from the Twelfth Dynasty onwards to the Thirtieth, and nearly every visitor to modern Egypt returns with one as a souvenir.

As we have explained on pages 58-9 the scarab-beetle was venerated as a symbol of the Sun-god; it was therefore a powerful amulet. To begin with, however, its use as a seal was regarded as equally important, the high officials of the Middle Kingdom having their names and titles, as well as attractive designs, cut upon the bases of their scarabs. As time went on, however, the amuletic significance of the object came uppermost in people's minds, and they began to wear it solely for good luck and for protection against evil spirits. Figures of the principal gods were cut upon the base, or formulae which were supposed to bring good fortune to the owner, while numbers of such scarabs formed part of the funeral equipment of every Egyptian of means during the later period. Scarabs could be either worn on a necklace or set in a ring upon the finger, a fine example of the latter being shown in Plate xxvi, fig. 1. It is set in gold, and bears the name and titles of "Ptahmose, *Sem*-priest and Chief of the Master-workmen."<sup>1</sup>

The popularity of scarabs with the tourist is a great temptation to the dishonest, and hundreds of

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* High-priest of Ptah. See page 64.

forgeries are produced in Egypt every year. The traveller who has no special knowledge of scarabs should refuse all examples offered to him by Arab dragomans, and, if possible, obtain the opinion of an expert before buying from *any* source. It is usually quite easy to tell a forgery by the method of cutting and by the glaze, but there are occasions on which even experts have been deceived. The very large blue scarabs which are hawked about at Luxor (the writer was once offered two for a shilling!) and the large scarabs with the head of a sphinx are, without exception, forgeries.

The use of *ushabti*-figures has already been described on page 113, but it is interesting to follow their history in greater detail. The ancestors of these figures are the wooden models which were placed in tombs after the Sixth Dynasty until the end of the Middle Kingdom, which chiefly represent servants busy at various tasks for their master, such as bakers, brewers, butchers cutting up the carcase of an ox, women weaving cloth, and boats rowed by sailors. These figures have jointed arms and are both attractive and amusing; a fine collection is exhibited in the Fourth Egyptian Room at the British Museum. The belief which prompted their use was that they could magically take the place of the servants who had waited upon the dead man during life, and in the next world minister to all his wants.

The significance of the *ushabti*-figure, however, which first became frequent during the Eighteenth

Dynasty, was very different. The Egyptians believed that the life of the blessed in the next world would be a celestial duplication of life on earth, hence they visualised a Heaven which closely resembled the land of Egypt. Since, therefore, the mainspring of life in Egypt was agriculture it followed that the same would be the case in the next world. This idea is well demonstrated by the vignettes of the realms of Osiris in the Book of the Dead, which show a country intersected by canals, just like Egypt, and fields of wheat and barley which are being reaped by the deceased. This was all right for the peasantry, thought the Egyptians, but what if those of noble birth or high rank should be conscripted by the gods for work in the fields and made to labour in a *corvée*? That such an idea was repugnant in the extreme to an educated Egyptian may be readily understood from such literary compositions as that which I have put into the mouth of Sebekhotep on page 79, and the *ushabti*-figure was invented to be an insurance against this terrible possibility.

The actual meaning of the word *ushabti* is not known for certain, one explanation being that the word is derived from the verb *usheb* "to answer," and therefore means "answerer"—i.e. one who comes at the summons of the deceased. The Sixth Chapter of the Book of the Dead, which is frequently carved or painted on the front of the figures, and of which a translation is given on page 113, shows very clearly what the figure is expected to do. It must take the place of its owner whenever the latter is

ordered by Osiris or other gods to perform agricultural labour of any kind. The *ushabti*, therefore, represents the deceased himself in mummy-form (Plate xxviii) and carries digging tools and a basket for its work. When it belongs to a woman it is represented as of that sex, and when to a Pharaoh it wears the head-cloth and cobra of royalty.

The *ushabti*-figures of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the best of the Nineteenth are made of wood or stone, beautifully carved. As examples may be taken the *ushabti* of a musician-priestess of Amon, of limestone, and the wooden figure of the official Huy, both figured on Plate xxviii. The manufacture of faïence *ushabti*, however, soon became very popular, and the blue glazed examples of King Seti I, especially No. 22818 in the British Museum, are very beautiful indeed. During the Dynasty of the Priest-Kings (Twenty-first) the figures were badly formed, but coated with a marvellous glaze of a deep and intense blue which gives the illusion of wetness. Two examples of these are figured on the same plate, both made for King Paynezem II. One is of the usual type, showing the king in mummy-form, but the other is of a different variety, representing him as dressed like a living person and armed with a whip in order to discipline the *corvée*. The latter type of *ushabti* is often found at this period. Under the Twenty-sixth Dynasty very large numbers of faïence *ushabti*-figures were made. They are of a type quite distinct from those of other periods, being always provided with a

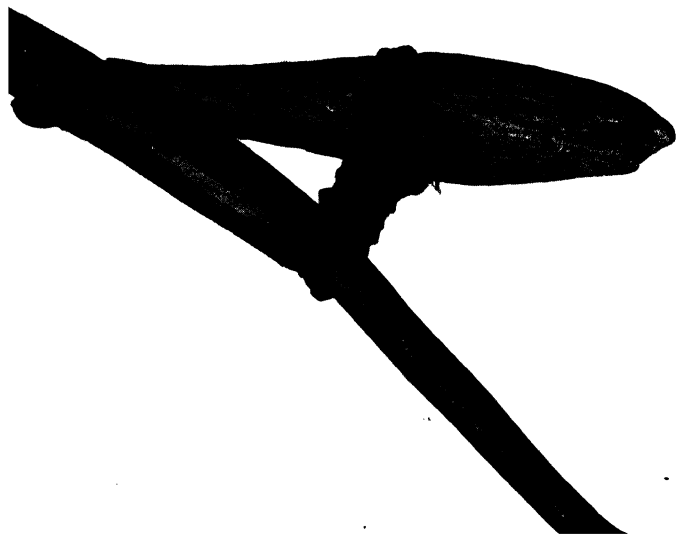
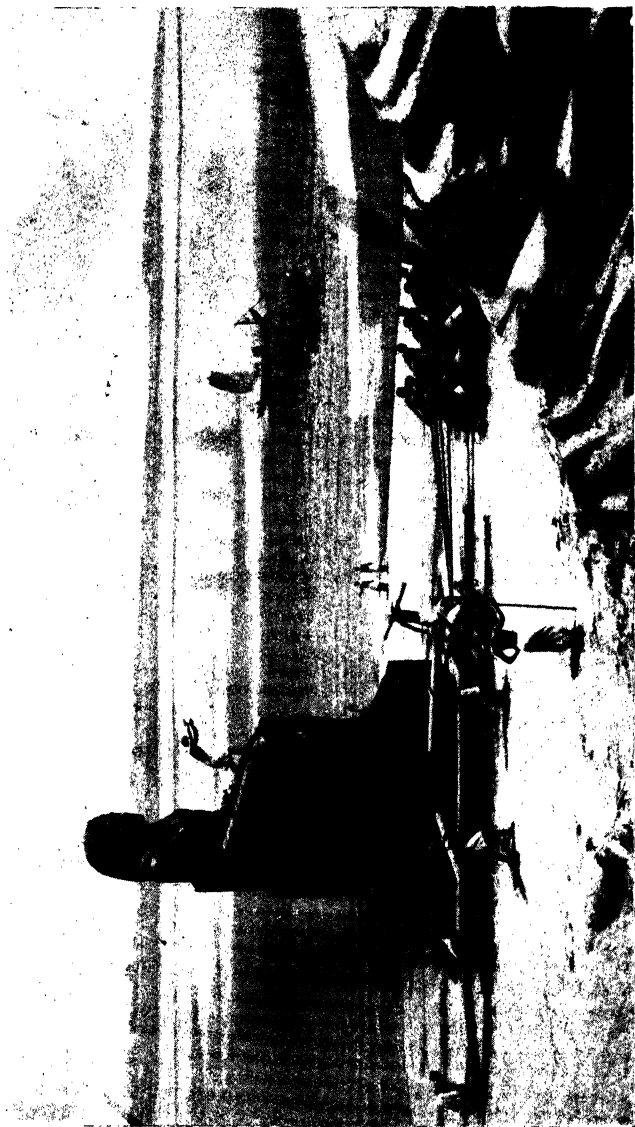


Fig. 1  
EGYPTIAN WOODEN HOE. *British Museum* No. 22803.



Fig. 2  
EGYPTIAN SICKLE OF WOOD, WITH IRON TEETH.  
*British Museum* No. 52894.



TRANSPORT OF A COLOSSAL STATUE DURING THE MIDDLE KINGDOM  
From the Diorama in the Science Museum, South Kensington.

plinth down the back. The glaze is usually apple-green in colour, and the best examples are very artistic productions, such as that of Pakhaās, figured on the same Plate.

Although objects had been glazed since pre-historic times glass did not appear in common use till the Eighteenth Dynasty, when we find beautiful vases of multi-coloured glass like that reproduced on Plate XIV, fig. 1. The art of blowing glass, however, was not known until Roman times, and these vases were made in a laborious manner. The glass was first drawn out into "canes" of various colours, examples of which have been found on the site of an ancient glass-factory at Tell-el-'Amarneh. A core was then modelled of some sandy material, and the glass canes, after being heated, were then wound round this so that they fused together. The required pattern was next obtained by pulling the different coloured bands, while still in a molten condition, up and down with a metal instrument. Finally, when the glass had cooled, the core was broken out and the vase was finished. Polychrome glass beads of this period are also very attractive, and closely resemble Venetian glass beads of the present day.

In the working of semi-precious stones, whether as separately carved pieces or for the purpose of inlaying, the ancient Egyptian craftsman was highly skilled. The true precious stones—such as the diamond or the pearl—were unknown in Egypt, but the greatest effect possible was obtained from



such materials as amethyst, carnelian, jasper, mother-of-emerald, lapis-lazuli, turquoise, porphyry, obsidian and others.

The most attractive carnelian beads belong to the Old Kingdom, the stone often having a cloudy appearance. During the Middle Kingdom the necklaces of amethyst beads are extremely beautiful, one of the most lovely being No. 34867 in the British Museum, which consists of spherical beads alternately made of amethyst and gold open-work, an "Eye of Horus" wrought in granulated gold work being threaded in the middle. Egyptian tomb-paintings sometimes show us the jewellers at work, and among various activities we see them drilling and polishing beads, the former process being accomplished by means of the bow-drill.

One of the most splendid finds of ancient Egyptian jewellery made in Egypt was the discovery by Sir Flinders Petrie and Mr. Guy Brunton of the Twelfth Dynasty treasure in the tomb of Princess Sat-Hathor-ant, near the pyramid of Senusert II at Lahun, which included a royal crown and two exquisite pectoral ornaments. One of the latter is held to be perhaps the finest known example of Egyptian inlay with cut stones. The design represents the cartouche of King Senusert II, *Khā-kheper-Rē'*, above the symbol of millions of years, a kneeling man holding notched palm-branches. On either side of the cartouche is a cobra from which hangs the *ankh*, or symbol of life, and behind these again, occupying the whole height of the

design, are the hawks of Horus wearing the solar disc upon their heads. The meaning of the design is, then, that Horus may grant life to Senusert which will extend into Eternity. The foundation of the pectoral is a base-plate of gold onto which thin golden ribs have been soldered to form the divisions necessary for holding the inlay, which comprises 372 pieces—195 of turquoise, 140 of lapis-lazuli, 35 of carnelian, and two of garnet. Nor is this all, for the back of the base-plate has been engraved in full detail, so that the object is almost equally beautiful when seen in a reverse position. Suspended on a necklace of spherical amethyst beads the effect of simple richness given by the pectoral could not be surpassed by any jeweller, ancient or modern.<sup>1</sup>

For sheer magnificence, however, the contents of the tomb of Tutankhamen, which has astounded the modern world in recent years, stands alone. Although the jewellery is of a heavier design than that of the Middle Kingdom and does not always appeal to the simpler taste of to-day, taken as a whole it is the supreme revelation of Egyptian skill in this direction. Chief of all the inner coffin beggars description. It is entirely made of gold varying from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millimetres in thickness, and is fashioned to represent the king in the form of Osiris. On his head he wears the striped royal head-cloth from which project the insignia of the

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in colour and fully described with the other jewellery, in *Lahun I, the Treasure* by Guy Brunton.

vulture and cobra, and in his hands, which are crossed upon his breast, he grasps the crook and whip of kingly power. The whole coffin is chased with feather-work, and on the lower portion are engraved winged figures of Isis and Nephthys. But the most wonderful feature of the coffin is the superb cloisonné work which has been superimposed upon the gold, showing the two goddesses, Nekhebet and Uto, in the form of vultures enveloping the king with outspread wings, all inlaid with semi-precious stones. It is a crowning masterpiece of the art of goldsmith and jeweller, an object which sums up in itself the glory of ancient Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A pair of gold armlets with inlaid designs is reproduced on Plate III. They are described on page 24.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SPIRIT OF EGYPT

IN the Introduction I gave a short summary of the history of Egypt, to which the reader might turn from time to time when reading other parts of this book. In that chapter, however, no attempt was made to give more than a bare outline of the chief historical events. Since then we have tried to learn something of life in ancient Egypt—to see the glory of Pharaoh and the customs of his subjects, to understand the worship of the gods and the preparations for a life beyond the grave. In this, the last chapter, I would like to put before the reader a general interpretation of the kingship and the State during the three great periods of Egyptian civilisation.

A little over a century ago the past of Egypt was a closed book. No one could read a word of the inscriptions upon Egyptian monuments, and excavations had not yet begun. All that was known of Egyptian history, religion and customs was gathered from the books of classical writers such as Herodotus, Diodorus and Strabo, who had visited Egypt in her decline and had seen only the end of her civilisation. Moreover, they were not fully equipped for their

work, since they could not read the ancient records of the country but depended upon the conversations which they had with the inhabitants. They merely toured Egypt as travellers, reporting what they saw and heard. Hence the information which they were able to collect, although intensely interesting and often of supreme importance to us, did not enable them to form a true estimate of ancient Egypt. To them the Egyptians were, principally, "of all men the most religious." The huge temples and the multitudes of priests continually occupied in divine observances, the dominating belief in life in the hereafter and the consequent elaborate preparations for the tomb, caused these writers to consider the Egyptians a sombre people, with thoughts ever fixed on the deep mysteries of existence, not minding earthly things.

During the Christian era the same ideas about ancient Egypt persisted, her mystery filling men's minds with awe and wonder, but a mystery she remained. At last, after laborious researches by various scholars, the identification by the Englishman, Thomas Young, of the royal name Ptolemy in the hieroglyphic portion of the inscription on the Rosetta stone was followed by the complete elucidation of the system by Champollion, in his famous *Lettre à M. Dacier* published in 1822, and the problem of hieroglyphic writing, which had for so long appeared to be insurmountable, was finally solved. From that day it was only a matter of time for the existing records to be

studied and translated, providing the learned world with evidence for the study of Egypt. Presently the decipherment of hieroglyphs was followed by organised excavation, and from then down to the present day the museums of the world have steadily become enriched with Egyptian objects of archæological and artistic importance. To-day we are confronted with a mass of material, and with the help of this, if we are patient, can obtain a clear understanding of the past.

The first landmark in Egyptian history is the series of monuments left by the Fourth Dynasty, the Pyramids and Sphinx of Gizeh with their surrounding tombs. Until a few years ago it was believed that the development of civilisation from that of the Third Dynasty to that of the Fourth was surprisingly rapid, but the recent discovery of the buildings surrounding the pyramid of King Zoser at Sakkara have shown that already in the Third Dynasty art and architecture had risen to great heights. But the monuments of Gizeh still mark the highest level reached by the civilisation of the earlier period, after which decay gradually set in.

From the rocky plateau on the west bank of the Nile, on the edge of the desert, the pyramids of Khufu, Khafrē' and Men-kau-Rē' raise their points to heaven. Greatest of the three is that of Khufu, called by the Egyptians *Akhet-Khufu*, "Horizon of Khufu," and it is the most wonderful in construction. Closely approaching it, however, the pyramid of

Khafrē', called *Ur-Khafrē'*, "Khafrē' is great," seems at first sight to be even higher, owing to the ground on which it stands being more elevated than that occupied by the other. The third pyramid, called "Men-kau-Rē' is divine," is much smaller than the other two. Built against the eastern face of each pyramid a temple stood in ancient times, wherein a special priesthood celebrated the services which would convey food, drink and magical powers to the Pharaoh sleeping in the depths of the pyramid which towered above. From each temple a causeway led down to an entrance-building up to which boats could be brought during the inundation. Of all these buildings the best preserved to-day are the causeway of Khafrē', and the entrance-building at the end of it, which is commonly known as "The Temple of the Sphinx" because the latter rises hard by it. That strange monument itself almost equals the pyramids in interest, and mystery has surrounded it for thousands of years. The Sphinx is a lion with the head of an Egyptian king, and was therefore supposed to represent Pharaoh. It also represented the god Horus in lion-form, and the two ideas became intermingled. The Sphinx of Gizeh was, in all probability, carved during the reign of Khafrē', the face being intended as a portrait of that king. The conception, like that of the Pyramids, was a colossal one, for a spur of natural rock was hewn into the required shape.

And so the pyramids of Gizeh, originally one of the Seven Wonders of the World, remain perhaps



WOODEN COFFIN, OVERLAID WITH GOLD, OF  
KING ANTEF V, XVII<sup>TH</sup> DYNASTY  
[*British Museum No. 6652*]

The coffin of Sebekemsaf, described on page





*Fig. 1* [Author  
VIEW OF THE DESERT AT EL 'AMARNEH, LOOKING SOUTH



*Fig. 2* [Author  
EXCAVATIONS BY THE EGYPT EXPLORATION SOCIETY IN  
PROGRESS AT EL 'AMARNEH

the most impressive monuments of antiquity. No traveller can fail to be moved by those tremendous buildings, whether he views them in the brilliant sunlight of day, or wanders around them at night when the full moon adorns them with a sheen of silver, or looks down upon them from the Mokattam hills at sunset when they rise purple out of a sea of gold.

To some people the pyramids might appear to be monuments of selfish pride, erected in honour of kings by the sweated toil of the masses. Such was the popular belief, thousands of years later, when Herodotus visited Egypt during the fifth century before Christ, and it is still the opinion held by many people to-day. But this idea is not wholly fair. The Pyramids were the logical outcome of Egyptian beliefs concerning the king.

During the first part of the Old Kingdom, as I have said in the Introduction to this book, the great nobles lived at court, their nomes or districts being administered by deputies of the Pharaoh. As time went on the nobles increased in power, and eventually succeeded in ruling their nomes directly and locally. The point is that, although the power of Pharaoh was theoretically absolute, his security largely depended upon the loyalty of the nobles who formed his court. As the power of the nobles increased a feudal system resulted in which the throne could be effectively controlled by the great lords. During the earlier part of the Old Kingdom, however, the kings proved

strong enough to restrain adverse influences, and the Pyramids of Gizeh mark the zenith of the Pharaoh's personal power.

Around the pyramids, however, the *mastaba*-tombs of the nobles are grouped in streets, like a city of the dead. Their occupants attended upon Pharaoh during life, and they still formed his court beyond the grave. It is the *significance* of this group of towering pyramid and surrounding tombs that I would ask the reader to keep in mind; it may be taken as a symbolical picture of the Egyptian State during this first great period of its civilisation—the gigantic tomb of Pharaoh and the tombs of his courtiers, the isolation of the king in supernatural supremacy, and the court supporting his position, but likely at any time to become a menace.

If we would gain a closer view of the Old Kingdom Pharaoh the diorite statue of Khafrē', in the Cairo Museum, repays contemplation. It represents the king enthroned in the conventional manner, his right hand clenched upon his knee. He wears the royal head-cloth upon his head, and sculptured above the back of the throne is the hawk of Horus protecting his head with its wings. It is the dignity of the whole conception that impresses the mind, the expression in stone of supreme and tranquil majesty. It is the adjective "tranquil" that I would emphasize, for, although the statue speaks of Khafrē's limitless power, that power is here represented in complete repose. Neither is Khafrē'

a mortal man; he is divine and companies with gods, unchanging, imperishable. As he sits there, enthroned in grandeur and overshadowed by the guardian deity of kingship, his majestic gaze seems to pass through us to the desert at Gizeh, to the enduring city of the dead.

But it is not enough to say that the Egyptians were content to allow a line of kings to rule over them. Religious beliefs of the most important nature were connected with the kingship. Since Pharaoh was the Sun-god's son and embodiment he was regarded as the most effective mediator between men and gods, the High Priest *par excellence*. Theoretically every service in every temple was performed by him, although in actual fact the local priests acted as his deputies. Nevertheless there were many important religious ceremonies which it was necessary for him to carry out in person, especially those connected with the agricultural prosperity of the country. The life of the king was closely bound up with that of his subjects, and with the cultivation of the crops on which they depended for their living. The welfare of the king was the welfare of the State. Even after death, and although succeeded by another Pharaoh, the safety of the dead monarch was vital to his subjects. His body must be embalmed and buried where no sacrilegious hands could ever touch it, within an everlasting pyramid, and attended by a perpetual priesthood consecrated to the celebration of those mysterious rites by which his spirit hoped to obtain immortality.

Both on the living and on the dead king the prosperity of man depended.

With the fall of the central power at the end of the Sixth Dynasty and the anarchy which followed the culture of the Old Kingdom passed away. The barons fought among themselves, an Asiatic invasion of some sort seems to have taken place, and Egyptian civilisation temporarily collapsed. The pyramids and temples of the great kings of the past were neglected, their priesthoods were disbanded, and an atmosphere of decay and ruin brooded over the monuments of the fallen State. Small wonder, then, that the literature of this period reflects a deeply pessimistic outlook, for men understood that the firm order of things had not really been so firm after all, and that Egypt was in dire need of a deliverer. Even the age-old beliefs concerning life after death were affected, and in the face of ruined tombs and neglected funerary cults the safety of a man's soul seemed by no means assured.

One of the most astonishing documents in all Egyptian literature belongs to this period, and has been called by Egyptologists "The Dispute of the Suicide with his own Soul." It shows to us a man who has experienced such great suffering that he wishes to end his life, but his soul endeavours to dissuade him. The text is difficult to understand, but the soul's objection to suicide seems to rest partly on the fact that its owner is poor, and that therefore the burial rites and food-offerings will be

neglected. Even the tombs of kings are neglected now. "They that builded in granite," says the soul, "and fashioned a hall in the pyramid, that achieved what is goodly in this goodly work—when the builders are become gods (i.e. when the kings are dead), then their offering-tables are empty and they are even as the weary ones which die upon the dyke without a survivor; the flood hath taken its end of them and likewise the heat of the sun, and the fish of the river-bank hold converse with them."<sup>1</sup> Far better to put thoughts of the next world aside and to make sure of a good time in this.

Other compositions belonging to this time describe in graphic terms the terrible confusion into which the country has been thrown, when "women are barren, and there is no conception. Khnum<sup>2</sup> fashioneth men no more because of the condition of the land," when "laughter hath perished and is no longer made. It is grief that walketh through the land, mingled with lamentations." If only a "pilot" could be found to guide things aright: "Where is he to-day? Doth he sleep then? Behold, his might is not seen."<sup>3</sup>

At length, however, deliverance came with the triumph of the House of Intef, which ruled at Hermonthis, south of Thebes. Egypt was again united under the Eleventh Dynasty, and the second great era of Egyptian civilisation, the Middle Kingdom, began.

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> The god who forms the bodies of mankind upon a potter's wheel.

<sup>3</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

In order to establish a strong central authority, however, the new dynasty of kings must have had to face difficulty on every side. This difficulty was essentially the same as that which had confronted their predecessors of the Old Kingdom—namely the dangerous power of the feudal lords. During the period of confusion following the collapse of the Old Kingdom these nobles had been left unchecked, and it is not to be supposed that the supremacy of the new monarchs from the south was either secured or maintained without constant friction with the numerous local rulers. Nevertheless the power of the latter was gradually broken by the Pharaohs, until their final suppression seems to have been accomplished by Senusert III in the Twelfth Dynasty.

The last ruler of the Eleventh Dynasty was succeeded by a man called Amenemhēt, the founder of the Twelfth Dynasty, during which the civilisation of the Middle Kingdom reached its zenith. It was a great period in art, and perhaps the greatest in literature, the language of that time being accepted by Egyptologists as the “classical” tongue with which earlier and later Egyptian is compared. If we would crystallise in our mind the ideas suggested by this age let us take, as we did when considering the Old Kingdom, some concrete monuments. The most striking and illuminating are the statues of the kings themselves.

The most famous of the Twelfth Dynasty Pharaohs were Senusert III and his son Amenemhēt III.

A statue of Senusert, which is in the British Museum, and a portrait-head, probably of Amenemhēt, formerly in the MacGregor collection, are reproduced on Plates xxxvi and xxxvii of this book, and the reader would do well to study them closely and to compare them with the statue of Khafrē'.

How essentially different is the treatment! Instead of the supreme and tranquil deity which breathes from the stone of Khafrē's statue we see in the portraits of Senusert and Amenemhēt the stamp of *human* experience. These Pharaohs are *men*, conscious of the power at their command and determined to use it to the full. The face of Senusert is fierce and vigorous, with a mouth that suggests an iron will and a relentless purpose. This is indeed the great soldier, the subjugator of Nubia, where he was worshipped centuries later as a god, and the statesman who at home finally crushed the nobles.

The portrait of Amenemhēt III, on the other hand, which is executed in obsidian, one of the hardest materials known, shows a more sullen face, full of strength and suggesting an enlightened mind, but the face of one who has found that "all is vanity." As we look at those heavy and contemptuous eyes we are carried back to his ancestor, Amenemhēt I, the founder of the Dynasty, to whom is attributed a literary composition entitled *The Instruction of Amenemhēt*. From this text it seems that, after a life devoted to the establishment of peace and prosperity throughout Egypt, the old



king was attacked one night in his bedchamber by plotters against the throne. The plot failed, but Amenemhêt resolved to associate his son, Senusert I, in the government and to withdraw from political life. In sorrow and bitterness he addresses his son as follows: "Thou that hast appeared as God (i.e. become king), hearken to what I shall say to thee, that thou mayest be king over the land, and ruler over the river banks, that thou mayest do good in excess of what is looked for. Be on thy guard against subordinates . . .; approach them not, and be not alone. Trust not a brother, know not a friend, and make not for thyself intimates,—that profiteth nothing."<sup>1</sup>

"Know not a friend." Was the rule essential to those wielding supreme authority ever more clearly stated? Has it not been proved true countless times during the history of mankind? In Amenemhêt's case neglect of it was nearly his undoing, for "it was he who ate my food that disdained me; it was he to whom I gave my hand that aroused fear therewith." The strong government which he had toiled to build up, the prosperity which he had secured to Egypt as the result of a firm administration, all were to mean nothing. "Mine images are among the living, and my shares in the offerings among men; and yet they contrived a conspiracy against me." When Pharaoh was alone in his bedchamber at night he was suddenly

<sup>1</sup> This and following quotations from the translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*



*Fig. 1*

[Author

CENTRAL ROOM OF A HOUSE AT EL 'AMARNEH



*Fig. 2*

[Author

CLOSER VIEW OF THE FLOOR OF THE ABOVE ROOM

Showing fragments of the painted mud casings of the ceiling-beams lying where they originally fell (see page 169).



attacked. "Behold, the abominable thing came to pass when I was without thee."

Although unsuccessful the attempt upon his life convinced Amenemhēt that a young and vigorous ruler was required to cope with the situation, and so he resigned the power to Senusert, his son. The sense of disappointment, felt since his time by many others than kings, was experienced by Amenemhēt to the full. "Behold, I have wrought at the beginning," he says, "and thou commandest at the end. . . ."

Turning back from this literary composition to the statues of the Twelfth Dynasty Kings we are able to understand better than before the period which they represent. Egypt is now a State held together by the indomitable will of one god-man. The illusion of a calm and undisturbed deity at the head of affairs is no longer maintained. Through fierce struggles and bitter experiences Pharaoh has ruled his kingdom, and in like manner he will rule it to the end. "I am King and I am God" the obsidian portrait of Amenemhēt III seems to say. "You must obey, or be broken!"

After the Middle Kingdom had crashed to pieces, and Egypt had been controlled for a long time by the foreign invaders known as the Hyksos, the latter were at last ejected and the old order restored by the princes of Thebes. Of the struggle with the Hyksos the greatest hour in Egyptian history was born.

The chief events of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth

and Twentieth Dynasties, during which the First and Second Empires were built up, have been described in the Introduction. We know more details of events during this period than during any other. Written records are comparatively numerous. Statues and pictures of kings, queens and great personages abound. Pharaoh is now a potentate, not only of Egypt but of the eastern world. The tribute of nations is poured into his coffers. Kings and princes of foreign countries pay homage and seek his favour. He is no longer concerned with internal strife but with the subjugation of land outside his boundaries.

In the literature and art of the time the resulting change in attitude of mind is plainly shown. The conception of Pharaoh as an aloof divinity, as it manifests itself in the Old Kingdom statue of Khafrē', was never completely revived, but the king as he appeared to the Egyptians of the New Kingdom bears a closer resemblance to that conception than to the Amenemhêts and Senuserts. Although quickened to a wider activity than his predecessor of the Old Kingdom, the necessary consequence of a life spent in foreign campaigns, the fiction of the tranquil god again holds the field. Pharaoh cannot fail to win all his battles, to subdue city after city. The beloved of the gods, who smooth all difficulties from his path, marches from glory to glory. Even when things begin to go wrong the illusion is kept up. The fact that, from the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty onwards, the Egyptian

king had to be content with an Asiatic Empire which was only a portion of his former one, and that after the middle of the Nineteenth Dynasty constant campaigns were required to preserve even Egypt herself from foreign invasion, made no difference whatever to the idealised picture of Pharaoh presented to us by the monuments. Literature and art alike depict him as the same unruffled divinity, almighty and unconquerable as ever. The truthfulness of the Middle Kingdom, which did not hesitate to shed a searching light upon both politics and religion, no longer existed.

There is no doubt, however, that by the time of the New Kingdom the position of the Pharaoh in the Egyptian State itself had undergone a very great change. The turbulent barons of former days had disappeared, and the entire administration of the country was performed by officials whom the king appointed. The gulf between Pharaoh and his subjects had widened considerably. The theocratic form which the Egyptian State had always possessed was becoming more and more pronounced, as, by little and little, Pharaoh became the tool of the priests of Amon-Rē'.

Surely this changed conception of kingship reached its most splendid pitch in the person of Rameses II, the Sesostris of Greek tradition! There is scarcely a temple in Egypt that does not bear his name, and at every turn his colossal statues stare down upon us. It is the custom of modern Egyptologists to sneer at Rameses and to represent him as a "vain

fellow" who, by his own tremendous self-advertisement, succeeded in impressing his personality and achievements upon the history of Egypt to the exclusion of his greater predecessors of the Eighteenth Dynasty. This opinion, repeated constantly in books, articles and lectures, has resulted in widespread contempt for Rameses and all his works among students of ancient Egypt. The present writer believes this opinion to be not only unfair but false, and invites the reader to listen in patience to another interpretation of Rameses.

The king of Upper and Lower Egypt, User-maā-Rē'-setep-en-Rē', son of Rē', Ramessu beloved of Amon, ascended the throne about 1301 B.C., and from the outset showed promise of an illustrious reign. He was undoubtedly one of the handsomest of all the Pharaohs who ever ruled, and with his kingly grace he combined an unparalleled creative energy. We see him portrayed as a young man in the granite statue at Turin, with delicately moulded features and an aquiline nose, but the New Kingdom sculptor, in his desire to produce a soft and pleasing effect, does not allow us to catch a glimpse of the fire within. For it is the burning ambition to be, to create and to perform, that distinguishes Rameses among Egyptian kings, and which straightway raised him in men's minds to immortal rank as the King of Egypt *par excellence*.

When Rameses began his reign there was some hope of recovering the empire in Asia which had



OBSIDIAN PORTRAIT-HEAD OF A KING OF THE XII<sup>TH</sup> DYNASTY, PROBABLY  
AMENEMHAT III

*(formerly in the MacGregor collection)*





UPPER PART OF A COLOSSAL GRANITE STATUE OF RAMESES II  
FROM THE RAMESSEUM AT THEBES. HEIGHT 8ft. 9in.

[*British Museum No. 10*]

been lost at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and to regain which his father, Seti I, had conducted arduous campaigns in Palestine and Syria. With the intention of completing the work which his father had begun Rameses marched northward with his army in the fifth year of his reign, to meet the chief enemy of his power in Syria, the Hittites. The climax of the struggle was reached in the famous battle of Kadesh on the Orontes, already mentioned on page 11 when, owing to Rameses' inexperience and over-impetuosity, the day was nearly lost to Egypt. But, as we have already said, the indomitable spirit of the Pharaoh transformed disaster into triumph, for, assisted only by his bodyguard, he launched upon the Hittites that annihilating attack which the Egyptians afterwards celebrated in an epic poem. As Rameses charged the foe in his chariot, drawn by horses gorgeously harnessed and with tossing plumes upon their heads, his great bow drawn back to send shaft after shaft through the hearts of the "wretches that know not God," he must indeed have seemed a present deity. The poem describes him as:

"A champion without his peer, with strong arms and stout heart, . . . beautiful of form like Atum, . . . victorious in all lands. None can take up arms against him; he is a wall for his soldiers, and their shield in the day of battle. A bowman whom none equalleth, stronger than hundreds of thousands together; . . . a thousand men cannot stand before him, and an hundred thousand are faint, when they see him. The terrible one, loudly shouting; who causeth the hearts of the foreign peoples to quail, as

doth a fierce lion in the desert valley. . . . Who rescueth his army, protecteth his body-guard, and delivereth his troops; . . . his heart is like a mountain of ore—he, King Rameses!"<sup>1</sup>

Glorious as the day had been, however, the battle was a drawn one, with heavy losses on both sides, and this result proved to be a forecast of the future. Although Rameses afterwards continued the struggle through many weary years the Hittites were much too firmly entrenched in Syria to be dislodged, and henceforward Egypt had to be content with retaining her hold of Palestine only. At last, in the twenty-first year of his reign, the hostilities between Rameses and the Hittites ceased, an elaborate treaty of peace being drawn up, the first international treaty known to history. The career of Egypt as a world-power had thus been finally checked by the appearance in the field of another nation equally powerful, and the time was drawing near when, so far from widening her empire abroad, she would be forced to defend her own self from foreign aggression.

The disappointment to Rameses must have been intense. He equalled and probably surpassed any of his predecessors of the Eighteenth Dynasty in ambition and strength of purpose, and, given their opportunities, might have carried the arms of Egypt even further than they had. But he was born too late. The circumstances of the world rendered the fulfilment of his dreams impossible.

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

He must find some other outlet for his superhuman energies.

And so began that era of building which astonishes even us of the modern age. In every part of Egypt rose temple after temple, colossal statue after colossal statue, conceived on a scale unparalleled in Egyptian history, the translation into stone of the Pharaoh's will to create. At Thebes in Egypt (Plate XXI, fig. 1) or at Abu Simbel in distant Nubia the stone Rameses oppresses us with his majestic proportions, whether standing erect, holding the insignia of Osiris, or seated as king with the double crown of Egypt upon his head. Again and again the account of the battle of Kadesh was carved upon the temple walls, again and again in sculptured relief Rameses repeats the deeds of valour performed on that day.

Nor was his activity confined to the building of temples only. In the north-eastern corner of the Delta he built for himself a new residence-city, called "House-of-Rameses-Great-of-Victories," probably the "Raamses" of the Bible. "How fair was the day of thy presence," says a poet of the time,

"And how fair was thy voice as thou spakest, when thou didst build House-of-Rameses-beloved-of-Amon, the beginning of every foreign land and the end of Egypt, the city, with beauteous balconies and dazzling halls of lapis lazuli and turquoise, the place where thy chariotry is marshalled, the place where thine infantry is mustered, the place where thy ship's troops come to port, when they bring thee tribute."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Erman and Blackman, *op. cit.*

This building activity, amazing in its extent and stupendous designs, is the concrete expression of Rameses' own personality. Unable to develop further as an international figure he was forced to express himself as best he could, living out his years in contemplation of his military past, in the celebration of gorgeous jubilees and the planning of more and yet more marvels in stone. The heir to the splendour of Egypt's Pharaohs, he was resolved to be the most splendid of them all. And he succeeded. When at last he died, after a reign of sixty-seven years, the father of one hundred and eleven sons and fifty-one daughters, he had almost blotted out the memory of other monarchs. Henceforward the world would know him as "Osymandias, King of Kings," *le roi soleil* of ancient Egypt.

FINIS

# INDEX



# INDEX

## A

Aahmose, king, 8  
 Āapep, serpent, 60  
 Abu Simbel, temple at, 11, 141, 199  
 Abydos, 8, 63-4  
 Agriculture, 121-2, 125 ff.  
 Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV), 10, 166-7  
 Amenemhät I, 92, 190 ff.  
 Amenemhät III, 8, 191, 193  
 Amenhotep I, 146-7  
 Amenhotep III, 9, 40 ff.  
 Amenhotep IV, *see* Akhenaten  
 Amenemuā, 31 ff.  
 Amenemuia, 147-9  
 Āmmüt, devourer of the dead, 117  
 Amon-Rē', King of the Gods, 9, 10, 13, 20, 21, 23, 61 ff., 67 ff., 147 ff. and *passim*  
 Animal gods, 43, 67 ff.  
 Animals, sacred, 43, 67 ff.  
 Ankhsenamon, queen, 51  
 Anubis, god, 106, 112, 116, 117, 123, 155  
 Anuket, goddess, 65  
 Apis, bull, 69

Army, 14, 16 ff.  
 Ashurbanipal, 13  
 Assiut, 18, 68  
 Assyria, 9, 13, 173  
 Atef-crown, 115  
 Atum, god, 56, 65, *see also* Sun-god  
 Ay, king, 10

## B

Baal, god, 17  
 Babylon, Babylonia, 9, 13, 173  
 Bacchis, bull, 69  
 Badarian civilisation, 2  
 Bakenkhonsu, 20 ff., 69 ff.  
 Ballah, Lake, 17  
 Beads, bead-collars, etc., 2, 24, 50, 169, 170, 172, 177-9  
 Bes, god, 47, 75  
 Boats, of the Sun-god, 57 ff.  
 Book of the Dead, 58, 84, 104, 110, 111, 113-118, 175  
 Book of Gates, 60  
 British Museum, ix, 2, 3, 41, 147 and *passim*  
 Bubastis, 68  
 Building, methods, etc., 130 ff.  
 Bulls, sacred, 68-9



Burial, methods and customs, 3,  
63, 101 ff.  
Byblos, 7

## C

Cairo, 5, 56, 64, 132, 145  
Cairo Museum, 186  
Cambyases, 15  
Canopic jars, 107-8  
Carchemish, Battle of, 14  
Carians, 14  
Champollion, 182  
Cleopatra's Needle, 139  
Cobra, *see* Uraeus  
Coptos, 18  
Crowns, royal, 4, 16, 19, 24, 28,  
36, 56; divine, 56, 61, 67, 115  
Cyrus, 14

## D

Daphnae, 14  
Deir-el-Bahri, 139, 163  
Deir-el-Medinah, 145  
Denderah, 18, 66  
Dhut-hotep, colossal statue of,  
133 ff.  
Diodorus, 104, 181  
Duamutef, god, 108, 112  
Duat, the, 59, 60

## E

Egypt Exploration Society, 69,  
168  
El-Kab, 4, 127  
Embalming, purpose and  
methods, 103 ff., 187  
Engelbach, Mr. R., 139

Engineering, methods, etc., 130 ff.  
Eye of Horus, 29, 109-112, 178  
Eye of Rê', 57  
Eye-pigment, 51

## F

Faïence, 172 and *passim*.  
Fayum, 8, 68  
*Fellahin*, 130, 168  
Food, kinds of, 51  
Funeral customs, *see* Burial  
Future Life, ideas of, 54, 55-6,  
175, 189

## G

Gardiner, Dr. Alan, 99  
Geb, god, 56  
Gizeh, 5, 183-7  
Glass, manufacture of, 177  
Glaze, use of, 171-177  
"Great House," *see* Pharaoh  
Greek writers, 104, 181-2

## H

Hall of Judgment, Hall of the  
Two Truths, 107, 115 ff.  
Hâpi-ur, Chapter VII, *passim*  
Hapy, god, 107, 112  
Harpocrates, god, 24  
Hathor, goddess, 18, 66, 67, 171  
Hatshepsut, queen, 126, 137-9  
Heart, seat of consciousness, 107;  
weighing of, 110, 111  
Heket, goddess, 94  
Heliopolis, 29, 56, 65, 68, 69, 72,  
94, 114

Hentmehyt, 101 ff.  
 Hephaistos, god, 64  
 Heracleopolis, 7  
 Herhor, 13  
 Hermonthis, 7, 69, 189  
 Hermopolis, 65  
 Herodotus, 132, 181, 185  
 Hieraconpolis, 4, 171  
 Hieratic script, 84  
 Hieroglyphic script, 81 ff.  
 Hittites, 10, 11, 197-8  
 Horakhte, god, 58, 96  
 Horemheb, 10  
 Hori, 30 ff.  
 Horus, god, 20, 27, 60, 67-8, 99,  
 110, 123, 186 and *passim*; sons  
 of, 107, 115  
 House of the Morning, 26 ff.  
 Houses, private, description of,  
 45 ff., 166 ff.  
 Hunting, 38 ff.  
 Hyksôs, 8, 9, 61, 193

## I

Imseti, god, 107-8, 112  
 Immortality, *see* Future Life  
*Imy Duat*, Book of, 60  
 Ink, 86  
 Isesi, 91  
 Isis, goddess, 56, 66, 75, 94, 105,  
 109, 112, 115, 180  
 Iuf-Rê', god, 60

## J

Justice, administration of,  
 Judges, 35 ff., 158 ff.

## K

Kadesh, Battle of, 11, 197 ff.  
 Karnak, 16, 20, 26; great temple  
 at, 20, 26 ff., 69 ff.  
 Kebehsnêuf, god, 107-8, 112  
 Keftians (Cretans), 90  
 Khâemuas, High-priest of Ptah,  
 64  
 Khâemuas, Vizier, 159  
 Khafrê', 6, 18, 183-4, 186-7, 191,  
 194  
 Khepri, god, 58-9  
 Khnum, god, 65, 111, 189  
 Khonsu, god, 23, 67, 70, 71, 74  
 Khufu, 6, 18, 183  
*Kohl*, *Kohl*-vases, 51

## L

Lahun, treasure of, 178-9  
 Lever, use of, 133  
 Libyans, 1, 12, 26, 92, 151  
 Literature, Egyptian, 90 ff., 135,  
 Chapter IX, *passim*  
 Logos, doctrine of, 65  
 Luxor, 25, 70, 73-5

## M

Magic, 33 ff., 101, 114  
 Manzet-boat, 58  
 Marriage, 48-9  
*Mastaba*-tombs, 6, 186  
 Mathematics, 88  
 Meht-urt, goddess, 66  
 Memphis, 4, 6, 18, 29, 33, 64-5,  
 67-9  
 Menes, Mena, 4

Menkaurê', 6, 18, 183-4  
 Menthu, god, 17  
 Menzaleh, Lake, 17  
 Merenptah, 11-12  
 Mert-segert, goddess, 75  
 Mesketet-boat, 58  
 Meskhent, goddess, 94  
 Milton, 67  
 Min, god, 18, 61  
 Mitanni, 9  
 Mnevis, bull, 68-9  
 Moeris, Lake, 8

Mummy, Mummification, *see*  
 Embalming; Royal mummies,  
 155-6, 163-4  
 Mût, goddess, 23, 67, 71, 74  
 Muu, the, 122

## N

Narmer (Menes), 4  
 Naukratis, 14  
 Nebt-taui, 25, 32, 36-7  
 Nebuchadrezzar, 14  
 Necho, 14  
 Necropolis of Thebes, 66, 101 ff.,  
 141 ff., 150 ff.; workmen of,  
 141 ff.  
 Nefertari, queen, 147  
 Nefertem, god, 67  
 Nefertiti, queen, 168  
 Neferurê', princess, 137  
 Negroes, 1, 8, 26  
 Neith, goddess, 65, 108  
 Nekhebet, goddess, 65-6, 180  
 Nekht, 38 ff.  
 Nenkhftka, 7  
 Nephthys, goddess, 56, 94, 119

Nesamon, Chapters II and V,  
*passim*  
 Nezmet, 38, 44, Chapter V,  
*passim*  
 Nile, 8, 55, 105, 125-6; Heaven-  
 ly Nile, 59  
 Nomes, 5  
 Nubia (Sudan), Nubians, 1, 8, 9,  
 11, 13, 14, 141, 191, 199  
 Nûn, 136  
 Nût, goddess, 56, 66, 144

## O

Obelisks, 136-140  
 Opening the Mouth, rite of, 122-4  
 Oracles, 146 ff.  
 Osiris, god, 18, 37, 55-6, 63, 69,  
 98, 105-6, 109, 110, 115-117,  
 123 and *passim*

## P

Paheri, tomb of, 126 ff.  
 Palace, royal, 22-3  
 Palestine, 2, 7-11, 14, 17, 62,  
 197-8  
 Papyrus, use of, 85; papyri,  
*passim*  
 Paynezem II, 176  
 "Peak of the West," 75  
 Penamon, 30 ff.  
 Pens, 85-6  
 Persian conquest, 14-15  
 Petrie, Prof. Sir Flinders, 167,  
 178  
 Pharaoh, the name, 5; his  
 activities, etc., 16 ff. and  
*passim*

Pottery, 2, 170, 171  
 Pre-dynastic Period, 2 ff., 170, 171  
 Priests, priesthood, 74 and *passim*  
 Priestesses, 25, 30, 74  
 Psammetichus I, 13  
 Psammetichus II, 14  
 Ptah, god, 18, 29, 64-5, 173  
 Ptah-hotep, Instruction of, 49, 91  
 Punt, Puntites, 2  
 Pyramids, 18, 131, 183-7; the Great Pyramid, construction of, 132 ff.

## R

Rameses II, 10, 11, 78, 80, 139, 141, 195-200  
 Rameses III, 12  
 Rameses XI, 13  
 Ramesseum, 78, 80  
 Rē', god, 20, 56 ff. and *passim*  
 Rē'-Horakhte, god, 23  
 Religion, 55 ff., and *passim*  
 Rhind Mathematical Papyrus, 88  
 Robbery of tombs, 150 ff.  
 Rosetta stone, 182

## S

SaIs, 13, 65  
 Saka, 98  
 Sakkara, 172, 183  
 Sat-Hathor-ant, princess, 178  
 Satet, goddess, 65  
 Scarab-beetle, scarabs, 58-9, 172-4; historical, 40 ff.  
 Schools, 78 ff.  
 Science Museum, 136

Scribes, 78 ff.  
 Sebek, god, 43, 68  
 Sebekhotep, 78-9, 175  
 Sekenenrē', kings called, 8, 9  
 Selket, goddess, 108  
 Senusert I, 92-3, 192-3  
 Senusert II, 178-9  
 Senusert III, 8, 190, 191  
 Serapeum, 69  
 Sesostris, 11, 195  
 Set, god, 56, 99, 100, 105, 110  
 Seti I, 10, 60, 145, 176, 197  
 Shardana, the, 26  
 Shipwrecked Sailor, story of,

94-5

Shu, god, 56  
 Sinai, 7  
 Sindbad the Sailor, 95  
 Sinuhe, story of, 92-3  
*Sistrum*, 21, 30, 66, 74  
 Smenkhkarē', 10  
 Soane Museum, 60  
 Somaliland, 2  
 Sphinx, the Great, 184; avenues of sphinxes, 20, 70  
 Stories, Egyptian, 91 ff.  
 Strabo, 181  
 Sudan, *see* Nubia  
 Suicide, Dispute of the, 188  
 Sun-god, 10, 20, 55 ff., 166 and *passim*  
 Syria, 7, 9-12, 14, 16, 17, 197-8;  
 Syrian chiefs, 19, 30

## T

Tasian civilisation, 2  
 Taurt, goddess, 47, 75  
 Tefnut, goddess, 56

Tell-el-'Amarneh, 10, 166-70,  
172, 177  
Temples, description of, 20, 26 ff.,  
70 ff., 141  
Thebes, 9, 13, 18 ff., 60-62, 103,  
141 ff., 193 and *passim*  
Thôth, god, 27, 65, 101, 110, 112  
Tiy, queen, 41  
Toilet-chest, 51  
Tombs, descriptions of, 60, 120 ff.,  
126 ff., 143 ff., 152 ff.  
Turra, quarries of, 132  
Tutankhamon, 10, 40, 51, 179  
Tuthmosis I, 137  
Tuthmosis, II, 137  
Tuthmosis III, 9, 12, 40, 127,  
137, 139  
Two Brothers, story of, 95 ff.

## U

Ubastet, goddess, 68  
Underworld, 55, 56, 59, 60, 105,  
115  
Upuaut, god, 18, 68  
Uraeus, cobra, 16, 23, 65-6  
*Ushabti*-figures, 104, 113, 174-7  
Uto, goddess, 65-6, 180

## V

Valley of the Tombs of the  
Kings, 80, 143, 157  
Valley of the Tombs of the  
Queens, 141  
Vases, stone, 51, 170, 171

## W

Wadi Hamamat, 7  
"Window of Appearing," 22  
Wine, 51-2  
Women, status of, 48-9  
Writing, nature and develop-  
ment of, 81 ff.

## Y

Young, Thomas, 182

## Z

Zedkhonsu, 101 ff.  
Zoser, 172, 183











